

LAJOS KOSSUTH SENT WORD...

**Papers delivered on the occasion of the
bicentenary of Kossuth's birth**

Edited by

László Péter, Martyn Rady, Peter Sherwood



**Hungarian Cultural Centre London
School of Slavonic and East European Studies
University College London**

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SSEES Occasional Papers No. 56

ISBN: 0-903425-67-X

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Front Cover: Lajos Kossuth, with a deputation of the Hungarian diet, enters Vienna on 15th March 1848. Contemporary lithograph from the National Museum, Budapest

Typeset and printed in Great Britain by Q3 Digital/Litho
Queens Road, Loughborough, Leics. LE11 1HH

Preface

The Hungarian Cultural Centre in London and the Centre for the Study of Central Europe, School of Slavonic and East European Studies (SSEES), University College London organized a conference ‘Lajos Kossuth Sent Word ...’ to commemorate the bicentenary of his birth in March 2002 with both Hungarian and British participants. Academician Domokos Kosáry gave his support to the conference from the start; he was scheduled to deliver the keynote speech but on medical advice could not travel from the heart of Europe to its edge. Thanks to the generous financial support of the Hungarian Cultural Centre and its Director-General, Mrs Katalin Bogyay, and the encouragement of Professor George Kolankiewicz, Director of SSEES, the papers read at the conference and two contributions commissioned after the conference can be published here.

The volume brings together the results of recent research on Kossuth’s politics in the setting of the Habsburg Monarchy’s great nineteenth century revolutions. The contributions, by many of the leading scholars on the subject, offer a variety of (and in some respects even contradictory) perspectives and assessments of such complex subjects as the 1848 revolutions. Our aim is to take the subject further by looking at it from new perspectives that may offer fresh insights into the political personality of a remarkable politician, rather than to try to achieve some common outlook either on Kossuth or on the revolutions themselves. This accounts for the catholicity of the volume.

The Editors.



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Introduction

Lajos Kossuth sent word...

László Péter

The 1848 Revolutions in Europe were predictable and were indeed predicted. When, however, in November 1847 Archduke István, palatine and *locumtenens*, opened the Hungarian diet in Pressburg nobody thought that it was going to be for the last time. Yet the Hungarian revolution turned out to be a good fit in the chain reaction of popular upheavals that shook the continent in the spring of 1848. Indeed the Hungarian revolution lasted longer than any of the others; it required the armies of two great powers to suppress it and 1848 brought lasting changes to the country. It removed much that was obsolete in order to create a Hungarian ‘civil society’ (*polgári társadalom*) out of legally and culturally diverse social groups, that is, a society based on laws applied to everybody equally in place of a society based on a hierarchy of privileges. The Hungarian revolution became a focus for national aspirations to attain independence and it made endemic the conflicts within the kingdom between the Hungarian and their rival Slav and Romanian movements. It is no exaggeration to say that 1848 was the year, more than any other, in which the Hungarians made history. 1848 became the emblem of national identity.

Lajos Kossuth was the protagonist of the revolution, the driving force behind events in Hungary between June 1846 and August 1849. This was recognized by contemporaries as well as by posterity both in Hungary and abroad. No other man had a more profound influence on Hungarian national *mentalité* and no other Hungarian has become even remotely as well known abroad as Kossuth. ‘Not less than one hundred and ten books have appeared in the English language, of which Kossuth is the subject; several thousand English articles were written about him and one hundred and fifty three English poems addressed to him’, wrote István Gál over half a century ago.¹ In Hungary literature on 1848 and Kossuth could fill a

¹ Stephen Gál, *Hungary and the Anglo-Saxon World*, Budapest, 1944, p. 17.

large library. In a single year, on the 150th anniversary of the revolution, in 1998, over 250 publications appeared² and in the course of 2002, the bicentenary of Kossuth's birth was celebrated by commemorative retrospection at numerous conferences and by a spate of new publications.

Public interest does not, of course, necessarily either help understanding or offer insight into a subject; indeed it invariably constrains the historians' outlook. Nevertheless, today we know so much more about the Hungarian revolution than historians did before 1945 because in the intervening years research has benefited from the strong public interest in the subject. Much has been uncovered by the publication of important primary sources and monographs based on rigorous scholarship. Yet notwithstanding the knowledge gathered on 1848 and indeed the wealth of available primary sources, including the surviving papers of Kossuth himself — a graphomane — several questions about the revolution and the War of Independence remain unanswered. As for Kossuth's political personality, if he is no longer quite an enigma, there are aspects of his career that remain relatively obscure. The charismatic Hungarian leader, still remembered in folksongs as the country's liberator, has inspired many scholars to write hagiographies about him and others to denounce him as a dangerous demagogue and rabid nationalist.

This introduction will briefly outline Kossuth's long and eventful life and explore the question of how a landless noble living in relative poverty was able to rise with such spectacular speed to the heights of political leadership in a society as strictly hierarchical as Hungary was before 1848.³

Lajos Kossuth was born in Monok, Hungary, on 19 September 1802 and died in Turin, Italy, on 20 March 1894. His life virtually encompassed the whole nineteenth century. Belonging to an old but impoverished noble family, as C.A. Macartney observed, he was 'a member of that dangerous class which possesses birth and brains but no means'.⁴ His

2 According to Róbert Hermann in *BUKSZ*, Budapest, 3, 2000, p. 264.

3 Most historians take for granted Kossuth's dominant role in Hungarian nineteenth century politics. They do not ask the question that the Szekel *primor* János Pálffy, an adherent and later opponent of Kossuth, asked: how a 'poor noble could, on his own, stir up such a magnificent and truly national revolution in this aristocratic-monarchic nation', János Pálffy, *Magyarországi és erdélyi urak*, ed., Attila T. Szabó, 2 vols, Kolozsvár, 1939 (hereafter *Magyarországi*) p. 81, quoted by Ákos Egyed, 'Kossuth és a székelyek 1848-ban' *Századok*, 128, 1994, p. 835.

4 C. A. Macartney, *Hungary, A Short History*, Edinburgh, 1962, p. 138. The summing up may reveal as much about Macartney's attitudes as about the character of Kossuth.

family came originally from Kossuthfalva in County Turóc (now part of Martin, Slovak Republic). They probably had a Slavonic background and were ennobled in 1263. The claim that the Kossuths were Slovaks is a misconception, apparently ineradicable from books in English.⁵ They were Hungarian nobles, living in multilingual upper Hungary, filling minor county offices. Some members of the large family became Slovak when Slovak nationality was formed in the nineteenth century. Kossuth's father had actually moved down from Turóc to Zemplén in the 1780s to fill a county post as a solicitor. Kossuth's mother was half-German. Her only son, Lajos (later followed by four sisters, all born in the Hungarian village of Monok) was given a good education. Although a Lutheran, he went to a Catholic grammar school in Sátoraljaújhely, where he came top of the class, then to a Lutheran college at Eperjes (Prešov) before moving to the Calvinist law school in Sárospatak. Combining three religions in education was unusual in multi-denominational Hungary.⁶ It set Kossuth at an early age against confessional prejudice and fostered religious tolerance.

Everyone around Kossuth, including all his teachers, recognized that he possessed an abundance of talent (he was particularly good at languages) which he combined with hard work. In the Law School, however, Sándor Kövy, a renowned jurist, predicted that *dominus* Kossuth would become an *országháborító* (troublemaker for the country).⁷ At the early age of twenty-one, having passed the bar examination, Kossuth became a practising lawyer in Pest. He attended the 1825–27 diet as an *ablegatus absentium*, a learner rather than a participant in politics as yet.⁸ After that Kossuth moved back to Zemplén where he soon became a county judge. A handsome, intelligent and hardworking

5 See, for instance, A. J. P. Taylor's classic howlers which he went on repeating in his *The Habsburg Monarchy 1815–1918*, London, 1942 (hereafter *Habsburg Mon.*), p. 57, unchanged in the second edition 1948 (and several reprints), p. 51. He must have got it from the Hungarian émigré Oscar Jászi's work who wrote that Kossuth was a 'small nobleman of Slovak extraction, who, according to reliable tradition, in his early childhood still read the Slovak prayer book in the church' [where, in the Hungarian Monok?], *The Dissolution of the Habsburg Monarchy* (first published in Chicago 1929) repr. 1961, pp. 307–08 (NB. The sociologist Jászi's book is brilliant but it bristles with errors, e.g. on p. 310 there are three).

6 György Szabad points this out in his *Kossuth politikai pályája*, Budapest, 1977, (hereafter *Kossuth*) p. 11.

7 Domokos Kosáry, *Kossuth Lajos a reformkorban*, Budapest, 1946 (hereafter *Kossuth*), p. 47.

8 Widows of aristocrats sent proxies to the diet who sat in the Lower Chamber without a vote.

young man, he now had well paid jobs, moved in the leading circles of the county, and threw himself into politics as an effective presenter of liberal nationalist ideas. A rising star with many friends, he also acquired a reputation for being a firebrand and managed to antagonize local conservatives. They brought a corruption charge against him and Kossuth could extricate himself from the situation only by moving in 1832 to Pressburg, once more as an absentee deputy for the diet.⁹

From now on and for the rest of his life Kossuth became a player in national politics. The Opposition leaders in Pressburg understood the need for publicity and had endless discussions on how to report the day-to-day proceedings of the diet. Kossuth cut short the debate by doing the job himself, sending out hand-written reports, the '*Gazette*' of the diet.¹⁰ He became well known overnight as the leader of the *jurati* group, young people with law degrees attached to deputies, who helped Kossuth to copy and distribute the *Gazette*. He soon became an associate of Baron Miklós Wesselényi, leader of the Opposition in the diet's Upper Chamber. After the dissolution of the diet both men, together with other opposition politicians, were charged by the authorities with sedition. Kossuth was arrested in May 1837 and Wesselényi in January 1839. The diet, reconvened in the latter year, demanded an amnesty for all the prisoners which the two moderate leaders Count István Széchenyi and Ferencz Deák eventually secured. In May 1840 Kossuth emerged from prison a national hero.

An admirer of Széchenyi, who had launched the reform movement to create a Hungarian civil society, Kossuth was deeply hurt when the Count, whom he called the 'greatest Hungarian', rebuffed his offer that they should work together for reform. In fact they soon became enemies and this led to bitter public debate over reform policy right up to 1848. Their conflict has been frequently described, particularly by non-Hungarian authors, as being between a 'liberal' Széchenyi and a 'nationalist' Kossuth. This is, however, a false contrast: both men were nationalist and liberal; what separated them was that on national issues Kossuth was always, and on liberal issues sometimes, more radical than his aristocrat opponent.

9 It was a close shave, as he himself recalled in old age. For the Zemplén years see Istvan Deak, *The Lawful Revolution. Louis Kossuth and the Hungarians, 1848–1949*, New York, 1979 (hereafter *Lawful Revolution*) pp. 17–24. For comprehensive accounts of Kossuth's early years see Kosáry, *Kossuth*, on the Zemplén years pp. 42–90 and István Barta, *A fiatal Kossuth*, Budapest, 1966 (hereafter *A fiatal*) pp. 23–182; on the embezzlement charge, pp. 59f.

10 *Országgyűlési* and later *Törvényhatósági Tudósítások*, have all been published in *Kossuth Lajos összes munkái*, Budapest, 1948 (hereafter *KLÖM*). There were 346 reports of the diet for less than 100 subscribers.

The year 1841 was a turning point in Kossuth's life. He married and settled in Pest where he was allowed to edit the *Pesti Hírlap*, a new journal. The leader articles of the 365 issues under Kossuth's editorship championed social reform, adopted a policy of magyarization and indirectly attacked the governmental system. At the same time the paper was able to claim the support of an ever-growing segment of the educated Hungarian public.¹¹ Széchenyi, watching with growing apprehension the popularity of the paper and its editor, attacked Kossuth: he said Kossuth may not have been fully aware of what he was doing but he was playing with fire; the paper was flirting with revolution. But Széchenyi was too late; the journalist was already popular and unstoppable. The long drawn out debate between them isolated the Count rather than Kossuth. Deák and Eötvös, though, had reservations about Kossuth's radicalism on national issues, but they kept away from Széchenyi. Kossuth did not benefit from the encounter either; in 1844 he lost the editorship of the *Pesti Hírlap*. Yet he threw himself into public life with renewed vigour, enrapturing his audience with his fiery oratory in the County Hall in Pest. He also founded associations: the *Védegylet*, the Trade Defence League, launched in the autumn of 1844, headed by liberal nationalist magnates. Kossuth, acting as its manager, organized 'Buy Hungarian' campaigns to boycott Austrian goods. The Trade Association was to foster national commerce, the Association for Industry to promote the establishment of factories. Energetic and indefatigable, Kossuth had a hand in many other initiatives, including the plan to build railways to the Adriatic. The practical results of this economic nationalism were slight and the Trade Association became a financial and moral disaster.¹² Kossuth withdrew from most of the associations in 1846.

The outbreak of the peasant revolt in Galicia in February 1846 had a profound effect on the life of the whole Monarchy¹³ and at once polarized Hungarian politics. The national liberals were forced to pull their act together. They had a problem: their support came from the counties where the majority of the nobility fully embraced nationalism, but was not yet won over to wholesale reform of social institutions. This was why the various factions of the Opposition were reluctant to form a party under a programme. After Galicia Kossuth broke through the stalemate. At a meeting in June 1846 the moderate and radical factions accepted Kossuth's proposal to adopt the emancipation of the serfs as a firm

11 With ten thousand copies the paper's circulation was as large as all the other papers put together.

12 See especially Kosáry, *Kossuth*, pp. 301–25.

13 For a brief account see Macartney, *Habsburg Mon.* pp. 307–09.

commitment. There was, however, no agreement at this time on whether the abolition of the nobility's tax privilege should also be included in the programme.¹⁴ From now on policy initiatives which the liberals eventually adopted tended to come from Kossuth.

Meanwhile, however, the Conservatives raced ahead. The supporters of the government, in two moves in November 1846 and March 1847, organized the politicians of 'judicious reform' (*fontolva haladók*) into a party. This finally forced the liberal-nationalist camp to bring together the factions of the Opposition under a comprehensive programme in June 1847. The oppositional declaration was assembled by Deák from drafts prepared by Kossuth, Batthyány and Eötvös, but the dominant influence was Kossuth's.¹⁵ His hold on the 'leading county' of Pest became so firm that, with Batthyány's financial support, he was elected as the county's first deputy for the diet called together for November 1847. The deputy *főispán* Gábor Földváry was furious. In his report to the Chancellor about the election he predicted that Kossuth would cause more trouble than the rest of the diet put together.¹⁶

Much depended, of course, on the choice of the liberal leader in the Lower Chamber. As in 1843, Deák stayed away from the diet, Széchenyi was in government service, Wesselényi had withdrawn and Batthyány, a remote magnate, was leader in 'the other place'. Eötvös was not even elected but, in any case, he was not leadership material. Leadership of the Opposition in the Lower Chamber, without any formality or even discussion, naturally fell into Kossuth's lap. And as the liberal camp, for the first time, was nearly as strong as the supporters of the government, a confident Kossuth was on his feet every day, making over sixty speeches at the diet between November 1847 and April 1848.¹⁷ He overplayed his hand and leading liberals soon started to plot against his overbearing leadership.¹⁸ Kossuth was saved by Paris.

At the outbreak of revolution in Europe there was one man in the Habsburg Monarchy who knew exactly what was to be done; Kossuth grasped the opportunity with both hands. The door was now open for carrying out wholesale social reform, including the introduction of

14 Kosáry, *Kossuth*, pp. 337–38; Szabad, *Kossuth*, pp. 96–98.

15 Kosáry, *Kossuth*, pp. 346–49; *KLÖM* XI, pp. 23–26, 152–64.

16 On 19 October, *ibid.*, p. 222.

17 András Molnár, 'Kossuth cenzúrázott országgyűlési beszéde', *Századok*, 136, 2002, p. 909.

18 Baron Zsigmond Kemény, *Forradalom után*, Budapest, 1908 (hereafter *Forradalom*), pp. 104–23; Lajos Kovács, *Gróf Széchenyi István közéletének három utolsó éve 1846–1848*, 2 vols, Budapest 1889 (hereafter *Széchenyi*) I, pp. 233–34, II, pp. 23–39.

general taxation and the emancipation of the serfs without immediate compensation to the landlord. For the collapse of the Metternich system made it possible to compensate the nobility for its sacrifices by the establishment of an independent and responsible government in which the landed gentry rather than the aristocracy would be the dominant force.¹⁹ Also, when on 3 March 1848 Kossuth read his Address draft in the Circular Session of the lower chamber, demanding the introduction of constitutional institutions in all parts of the Monarchy, the Hungarian leader became for a while the toast of the liberal public in Vienna.

The Court had to give way: the reform package went through and in the April Laws Hungary, in effect, received a new constitution with a devolved government, headed by Batthyány, in which Kossuth became minister of finance. He was now, as the 'mouthpiece of the government', the driving force in attaining full institutional separation (save for the common person of the monarch) from the rest of the empire.²⁰ As minister, Kossuth was dealing with matters well outside his remit²¹ and had a stronger power base in the new national assembly than all the rest of the cabinet together. Kossuth took over when the Austrian government's demand for the revision of the April Laws and the invasion by Jelačić, the ban of Croatia, led in September to the disintegration of the Batthyány government. As president of the committee of national defence, elected by the national assembly, Kossuth became a parliamentary dictator. In his hands came together all the branches of the executive power; he administered the counties largely through commissars who replaced the county officials. Above all, he exercised political control over the national army and influenced military strategy in the war against the imperial army (although the generals frequently disobeyed him). He reached the peak of his personal authority by forcing through the national assembly the Independence Declaration that deposed the Habsburg dynasty on 14 April 1849. As Governor-president of Hungary, and as such politically unassailable, he appointed the Szemere cabinet, yet instead of exercising presidential power, he remained in charge as the head of the government.²² After the Hungarian

19 See György Spira's analysis in his *A magyar forradalom 1848–49-ben*, Budapest 1959, pp. 51–54 and 65–68 and especially 'Kossuth és az utókor' in *Jottányit se a negyvennyolcóból!*, Budapest 1989, pp. 73–104 (78–88).

20 László Péter, 'Old Hats and Closet Revisionists: Reflections on Domokos Kosáry's Latest Work on the 1848 Hungarian Revolution', *The Slavonic and East European Review*, 80, 2002, pp. 296–319 (305–09).

21 György Spira, 'Kossuth hagyatékából', *Századok*, 128, 1994, p. 889.

22 Deák, *Lawful Revolution*, pp. 274–76.

army units suffered decisive defeats from the Austrian and Russian armies Kossuth resigned on 11 August 1849, appointing General Görgei commander-in-chief and dictator (knowing that the general would surrender). He then fled with close associates and many soldiers to the Ottoman Empire. His party was interned by the Turkish authorities at Vidin (Bulgaria) and later transferred to Kütahia (Anatolia). Austria demanded Kossuth's extradition but Palmerston, helped by the French, saved Kossuth and his entourage; the western powers strengthened the backbone of the Sublime Porte by arranging a naval demonstration against Austria and Russia. Eventually the US government sent the frigate 'Mississippi' which took Kossuth's party to Marseilles and then to England in 1851.

For the rest of his life Kossuth remained an émigré and a world famous one at that. Already in Vidin he resumed leadership of the nation, styling himself once more Governor-president and denouncing General Görgei as a traitor (a most unfair slur on the character of Hungary's greatest soldier of modern times).²³ Kossuth's aim was to rekindle the revolution in order to liberate Hungary from Habsburg rule. He sent emissaries there to organize resistance, used his oratorical brilliance at public meetings in England and America to persuade governments to intervene on behalf of Hungary, raised funds to further the cause of Hungarian independence and in 1861 even printed money in London for the liberation. When France and Sardinia, and later Prussia, prepared for war on Austria, Kossuth organized Hungarian legions for the invasion. That never happened: without Hungary the Habsburg empire would not have been a great power and its survival was a vital European interest. Kossuth's Danubian confederation scheme for Hungarians, South Slavs and Romanians, as a substitute for the Habsburg Empire, was nowhere taken seriously. In Hungary it even had the opposite effect, helping Deák to clinch a constitutional settlement with Emperor Franz Joseph in 1867 through which Hungary acquired 'home rule' of sorts and unparalleled influence in central Europe. Kossuth, however, in his 'Cassandra letter' to Deák denounced the settlement, as a sell-out, raising the spectre of the 'death of the nation'.²⁴ Through extensive correspondence

23 Domokos Kosáry, *A Görgey-kérdés története*, 2 vols, Budapest 1994, cf. László Péter, 'The "Görgey Question" Revisited: Reflections on Academician Domokos Kosáry's Work', *The Slavonic and East European Review*, 76, 1998, pp. 85–100.

24 'Do not take the nation to a position from which it could no longer be the master of its fate', wrote Kossuth, *Deák Ferencz beszédei*, ed. Manó Kónyi, 6 vols, Budapest, 1898, 5, pp. 7–8. Adherents of Kossuth, and frequently even others, have read this letter as a prediction that the Habsburg Empire would fall — and Hungary with it. I cannot find this 'prophecy' in the letter.

from Turin, where he finally settled, Kossuth carried out rather effective agitation against the Dualist system.²⁵ His reputation was enhanced by the publication of his memoirs in the 1880s.²⁶ Franz Joseph repeatedly urged the Hungarian government to check the spread of the ‘Kossuth cult’ in the country, to no effect.²⁷ On his death in 1894 his body was taken back to Budapest for public burial; this turned into a massive demonstration for the political ideal the Great Exile had stood for throughout his life.

Even this briefest outline suggests that Kossuth’s career cannot be measured in terms of success in the strict sense. From a practical perspective his political path was, not to put too fine a point on it, strewn with conspicuous failures. It may be argued that even at the beginning of his career, in Zemplén, he failed as a budding politician so conspicuously that he was forced to flee to Pressburg. There the publication of the diet Gazette led to his arrest and three years’ imprisonment. Then came the *Pesti Hirlap* and, in spite of its astounding success, he lost the editorship of the paper after only four years. The ‘Buy Hungarian’ movement was a flop, the Commercial Society a disaster. Soon after he became leader of the Opposition he came close to losing his position. He re-emerged as the dominant force within the Batthyány government. By insisting (and repeatedly) on a one-sided, too loose interpretation of the April Laws to wring further concessions from the Court, Kossuth pushed for the unattainable aim of ‘personal union’ and this led to an intractable conflict with Vienna. To accept the imperial army’s challenge in October 1848, at a time that the revolutionary movement in the rest of Europe was on the wane, bordered on recklessness. It is difficult to imagine Hungary sliding into military conflict with the imperial army without the presence of Kossuth in the saddle. The country was told that the war was about the defence of the April Laws — rather than about the defence of all that Kossuth and Batthyány had read into the April Laws. All in all, it could be argued with a dash of hyperbole, that more than any other person Kossuth was responsible for securing the April Laws in the spring of 1848 only to gamble them away a few months later.

25 Gyula Szekfű, ‘Az öreg Kossuth 1867–1894’ in *Emlékkönyv Kossuth Lajos születésének 150. évfordulójára*, 2 vols, Budapest, 1952, 2, pp. 341–433 (esp. 355f, 369f, 396f etc).

26 *Kossuth Lajos iratai*, 12 vols, Budapest, 1880–1906.

27 Ferenc Eckhart, ‘Ferencz József és a Kossuth-kultusz’, *Magyar Szemle*, 1, Budapest, 1927, pp. 370–78.

In April 1849, after the Spring Campaign, when Görgei's strategy had paid off and the Austrian army was practically driven out of the country, instead of exploring the by then undoubtedly faint chance of a compromise,²⁸ Kossuth forced through the national assembly the Independence Declaration, an act based on hopelessly unrealistic calculations. The defeat of the Independence War was unavoidable in 1849, yet the émigré Kossuth sent in agent after agent to organize new uprisings. His policy of cajoling western governments to liberate Hungary was a non-starter because no power could contemplate a Europe without the Habsburg Empire. Kossuth was dined and wined in the United States by the great and the good but politically his visit there was yet another flop.²⁹ We could go on and on listing the failures, all of which could be properly substantiated, but even without that it is clear that for Kossuth politics was not the art of the possible.

Yet the vantage point from which Kossuth appears as a failed politician is flawed. It is not quite accurate and it is even disingenuous: the policy failures occurred largely on the nationalist side of Kossuth's programme. On the social side he should be credited with enduring achievements. He had the lion's share of responsibility for putting together the reform programme for the Opposition in 1847 and pushing through the diet in the following year basic liberal reforms such as the liberation of the serfs, the principle of general taxation, the dismantling of the system of privileges and the introduction of representative and responsible government. The liberal reforms were combined with the bogus programme of building a centralized national state. But the critical point to be made is that the county gentry could not have been won over to the liberal reforms without Kossuth's partly unrealistic, national radicalism. Later, the Danubian confederation plan might have been a non-starter but it germinated the idea that Hungarians could not secure their national aspirations without accommodation with the other nations of the Danube region.

Hungary did not lack brilliant men engaged in politics in the 1840s. They did not, however, have what Kossuth undoubtedly possessed to secure political leadership. Széchenyi, Deák and Eötvös, all intellectually Kossuth's superiors, were more original, more profound thinkers and revealed much better judgement. Yet they lacked some other qualities and attitudes that elevation to leadership requires. Had Széchenyi been endowed with at least some of these, the social transformation of 1848 would have been quite different from how it turned out. A free-wheeling

28 See Domokos Kosáry's argument, *Magyarország és a nemzetközi politika 1848–1849-ben*, Budapest, 1999, pp. 66–70.

29 Deak, *Lawful Revolution*, pp. 342–45.

intellectual who single-handedly fired public opinion for reform, Széchenyi did not know how to use the public opinion he had stirred up. Perhaps he was too big a man to bring it under his control; perhaps he never tried, as he was primarily addressing his own class, the aristocracy (in contrast to Wesselényi).³⁰ Also, he lacked presentation skills: his powers of oratory were meagre and he could, unwittingly, offend his audience. Apart from close associates he was admired rather than liked and accepted.³¹ Eötvös, in contrast to Széchenyi, had presentation skills. His speeches were masterful products of a first class brain, yet they were too high powered for the not so well educated county deputy who unfairly labelled him a ‘Centralist’ — an enemy of the county system. Eötvös spoke for a tiny minority within the minority of liberal nationalists.

Leadership should have stayed with Deák. He had become a respected leader of the reformers in the Lower Chamber by the end of the 1830s, by which time his authority was recognized on all sides. His speeches had clarity, were penetrating to the core, and expressed all that most people would have loved to say, had they had the ability to do so. But in the 1840s he inexplicably withdrew from the rough-and-tumble of daily affairs. He did not disengage from politics: he retained his authority, carrying on an extensive correspondence and giving advice to others. He remained active in his own county Zala and drafted legislation for the Opposition, including the penal code.³² But he refused to attend the 1843–44 diet and because of poor health remained on his estate in Kehida rather than attending the last diet in 1847.³³

30 Széchenyi was upset in 1833 by seeing Wesselényi ‘going along’ with the provincial nobles rather than ‘exert influence’ on them, Kosáry, *Kossuth*, p. 262.

31 Apart from Széchenyi the aristocracy produced only two other politicians, Baron Miklós Wesselényi and Count Aurél Dessewffy in the 1830s. By 1848 the former was in broken health, the latter dead. The rest of the aristocrat politicians of that vintage were not leadership material. This was pointed out by Zsolt Trócsányi, *Wesselényi Miklós*, Budapest, 1965, p. 65. Count Lajos Batthyány became leader of the Opposition in the Upper Chamber in 1843; Eötvös too became prominent in the 1840s.

32 Istvan Deak writes that Deák was ‘lazy, pessimistic and depressive’, *Lawful Revolution*, p. 34, (this is largely, though not entirely, unfair).

33 The country was flabbergasted when in 1843 Deák declined to accept the mandate from Zala because of the breach of peace over his election and also refused to accept the post from Pest, the leading county, which everybody urged him to accept. In 1847 Deák was ill (an established fact), see Zoltán Ferenczi, *Deák élete*, 3 vol, Budapest 1904, I, pp. 366–90 and II, pp. 61–70.

The power vacuum was promptly filled by Kossuth,³⁴ and his elevation was entirely deserved. As Istvan Deak noted, Kossuth had ‘an unheard of capacity for hard work’ and, while the other leaders were landlords who took up politics, Kossuth was a professional politician through and through.³⁵ Indeed, he was the very first one in Hungary. Also he had much better social skills than others to be a leader. But these attitudes and skills flourished on natural endowments. C. A. Macartney wrote that although

his thought was neither profound nor original, his facility in expressing it in convincing terms was unique. He was one of the most persuasive men ever to be born. He was of notably handsome appearance, with brilliant blue eyes under a magnificent forehead, a most winning manner and a beautifully modulated voice. As a speaker he possessed an unfailing readiness and gift of impromptu and an inexhaustible fluency which seldom failed to carry his audiences with him, at any rate if they were large. He was no less gifted with his pen, having an extraordinary gift of enlisting his readers’ sympathy for whatever cause he was pleading, by emotional appeal rather than intellectual, but no the less strongly for that. He was a superb player on the heartstrings of the Hungarian people, because they were also his own.³⁶

Kossuth’s technical brilliance chimed with the time and place; for oratory becomes a necessity in times of crisis and especially of war. Skilful

34 See Kosáry, *Kossuth*, pp. 299f.

35 Deak, *Kossuth*, p. 30. A landless noble, Kossuth earning well as editor of *Pesti Hírlap* bought a small property at Tinnye in County Pest which, however, he soon had to sell: Kosáry, *Kossuth*, pp. 288 and 324.

36 Macartney, *Habsburg Mon.*, p. 249. Istvan Deak captured Kossuth’s oratorical technique: ‘What struck most observers was the virility and elegance of the man. At forty-six, his brown hair was now lightly flecked with white; his beard — full and wavy and thereafter so much in vogue in Hungary — gave him dignity and enhanced the handsomeness of his face. He was frail, and when he began to speak, he always acted as though he were about to collapse. Then, as if overcoming with a superhuman effort his weakness, his exhaustion, and his many illnesses (of which he complained constantly), his voice rose gradually until it rolled into a rumbling storm. Kossuth was not only a brilliant speaker — alternately majestic, dignified, fearsome, mellow, flattering and humble, refined and direct in simplicity — but his voice carried farther than that of anyone else, an indispensable attribute for someone constantly addressing crowds.’ Kossuth could enrapture his audience not only in Hungarian and German but also in English. Deak writes that in America Kossuth was ‘continually asked to make speeches; and his listeners waxed delirious over the elegance of his manners, his costume, his beard, his hat — and his dignified, faultless, and thoroughly antique English.’ Deak, *Lawful Revolution*, pp. 74 and 343. On the effect of Kossuth’s oratory on Hungarian peasants see Alice Freifeld, *Nationalism and the Crowd in Liberal Hungary, 1848–1914*, Baltimore, 2000, esp. pp. 76–78. For contemporary descriptions see Kosáry, *Kossuth*, pp. 326–28; Pálffy, *Magyarországi*, pp. 78–118.

oratory can change people's lives; Kossuth's changed the life of a whole nation in 1848.

Yet it would be a myopic view to attribute Kossuth's ascendancy to his voice, his oratory and pen. Equally important was that his phenomenal stamina turned every failure to success. As Kosáry points out, irrespective of the outcome of Kossuth's enterprises, each made Hungarian nationalism stronger and more demanding.³⁷ In Zemplén Kossuth had a small circle of friends and admirers. As editor of the gazette he became the leader of some hundred *jurati*. The prison years brought him publicity at the diet; the *Pesti Hírlap* attracted 10,000 subscribers. The *Védegylet* might have been a flop but 50,000 people patronized it. Kossuth maintained an extensive correspondence with supporters in most parts of the country. In the 1840s he was in fact building up the cadre system of a political party.³⁸ Kossuth instinctively understood the benefits of what is today called networking — and no one else in Hungary did.

Yet ultimately it is not even primarily the professional competence of this modern charismatic politician that can satisfactorily explain his rapid rise and lasting significance in Hungarian politics. Kossuth expressed with verve and in pure, emotional form the deepest aspirations of a great number of Hungarians for national liberty, however unrealistic that might have been. Without Kossuth it would be difficult to imagine how Hungary could have become simultaneously embroiled in conflict with Vienna, the Slavs and the Romanians. This was a great disservice to the cause that Kossuth, the architect of the policy, so faithfully served throughout his life. Yet the Independence War also provided historical memory of a struggle that reinforced the identity of Hungarians as a community and the ideal of national liberty was predicated on a society based on legal equality. Kossuth set a standard for Hungarian politics, the social consequences of which outlasted even the Habsburg Monarchy. That standard was in the nineteenth century more effective in liberating the serfs and creating Hungarian-speaking middle classes than the alternative schemes available. And it would be unimaginable on any other Hungarian politician's bicentenary to find ordinary people bursting, with eyes dimmed with tears, into a song about him.

37 Kosáry, *Kossuth*, p. 325.

38 Kosáry's descriptions shed light on this process, *ibid.*, pp. 190–91, *passim*, 310–12.

Lajos Kossuth in the Batthyány Cabinet

Aladár Urbán

Lajos Kossuth, reached the zenith of his power in 1848–49. He became minister of finance in the first Hungarian ministry, acted as spokesman for the government and when the cabinet resigned in September 1848, he was elected chairman of the National Defence Committee by the National Assembly. He was now in charge of the government. Then, in April 1849, he became Governor-president of Hungary after the House of Habsburg had been deposed.

Kossuth's proposed Address to the throne, delivered on 3 March, which was prompted by the February revolution in Paris, was the opening move in his rise to power in 1848. The draft Address gave shape to the Opposition's plans: general taxation (including the nobility) was to be introduced together with the abolition of serfdom and combined with a system of compensation to the landlord for the loss of his revenues. In addition to social reform affecting the vast majority of the population, the Address extended to political institutions. It demanded representation for the towns, the creation of proper representative government, the national reform of the army system, the 'introduction of financial responsibility' and, in order to secure all these, the creation of an 'independent' national government. Kossuth also referred to the threatening financial crisis and the general economic backwardness for which he blamed the system of imperial bureaucratic government. Yet, he went on resourcefully, the introduction of modern 'popular constitutional institutions' could provide security against 'possible adverse events', could 'bind together the Monarchy's various provinces' and could offer 'unfailing support to the reigning house'.¹ The famous speech was made in the Circular Session which approved the draft as did the Lower House unanimously (i.e. *nem. con.*) the next day. The draft Address was then duly sent to the Upper House which, however, could not be called together as its president,

1 *Kossuth Lajos összes munkái*, Budapest, 1948, (hereafter *KLÖM*), XI, pp. 619–28.

Archduke István, the palatine, and his two deputies, the chief justice and the lord chief treasurer, had been summoned to Vienna precisely in order to block the proceedings.²

The outbreak of the revolution in Vienna on 13 March put an end to these delaying tactics. The palatine rushed back to Pressburg and on 14 March the Upper House passed the Address. On Kossuth's proposal a deputation appointed by both Houses submitted the Address to Ferdinand on the following day. The deputation and, particularly Kossuth, were received enthusiastically by the Viennese³ and the court conceded the demand to appoint Archduke István as the king's *alter ego* in his absence from the country. The Staatskonferenz, however, opposed the demand that Count Lajos Batthyány should be appointed forthwith as the president of a responsible government. The palatine, bypassing the Staatskonferenz, then turned to Ferdinand who gave his (verbal) consent to the demand and István on 17 March asked Batthyány to form a government.⁴ Thus Kossuth had much reason to be satisfied. His initiative on 3 March, together with the revolution in Vienna, lent a decisive impetus to the reforms and he kept the promise he had made to the *jurati*, who had bidden him farewell with a musical torch-light procession before his departure to Vienna, that he would return from there with Batthyány as prime minister.⁵

Kossuth in the Government

It was taken for granted by both liberals and conservatives that Kossuth would be in the cabinet. The young radicals in Pest compiled their own ministerial list of ten, of whom five did indeed become ministers. On their

2 Mihály Horváth: *Huszonöt év Magyarország történetéből 1823-tól 1848-ig*, Geneva, 1864, II, pp. 588–600; Árpád Károlyi: *Az 1848-diki pozsonyi törvénycikkek az udvar előtt*, Budapest, 1936, pp. 3–4.

3 The immediate publication of Kossuth's Address in German gave a boost to the demand for political reforms in Austria. See Horváth *Huszonöt év*, pp. 591–93, R. John Rath, *The Viennese Revolution of 1848*, Austin, 1957, p. 62. For the English translation of Kossuth's Address, see *Correspondence Relative to the Affairs of Hungary 1847–49. Presented to Both Houses of Parliament...*, London, 1851, pp. 42–44.

4 For the Palatine's letter to Batthyány, see *Gróf Batthyány Lajos miniszterelnöki, hadügyi és nemzetőri iratai*, (hereafter *Batthyány iratai*) ed., Aladár Urbán, Budapest, 1999, p. 132.

5 For the events of these days: Aladár Urbán, *Batthyány Lajos miniszterelnöklése* (hereafter *Batthyány*), Budapest, 1986, pp. 13–36.

list Kossuth appeared as minister for industry and commerce. Kossuth's 'Buy Hungarian' campaign and his Commercial Society — initiatives that followed his loss of the *Pesti Hírlap* in 1844 — explains the choice.

Batthyány, however, was in no hurry to put his cabinet together. He was awaiting the arrival in Pressburg of Ferencz Deák, whom he highly respected and who had stayed away from the diet. No decision was made on the formation of the government until 22 March. We have some information from the report to Ambassador Lord Ponsonby by J.A. Blackwell, the agent sent to the diet by the British ambassador in Vienna. According to Blackwell, Batthyány offered the interior portfolio to Bertalan Szemere and that of education to Eötvös, but neither was keen to serve in the same cabinet as Kossuth. According to Blackwell, they explained that he should once more be editing a newspaper. Blackwell's comment was that, if Kossuth wanted to be in the cabinet, Batthyány would have to accept his conditions.⁶ Blackwell's informant was probably Szemere and while it is quite possible that he and Eötvös expressed their reservations to Batthyány about Kossuth, it is quite improbable that they would have brought it to Kossuth's notice.

The leaders of the Opposition met on 22 March (Széchenyi was apparently not invited) to discuss the distribution of the ministerial posts but no contemporary account of the meeting survives. On the following day, news reached Pressburg that the radical youth in Pest had become restless because of the delay in the formation of the government. Batthyány then, meeting Széchenyi in the Lower House, offered him the Transport portfolio which he accepted.⁷ There and then Batthyány announced the list of his cabinet with eight members. He repeated the announcement shortly afterwards in the Upper House. (The Lower House had approved the night before the bill on the creation of the responsible ministry⁸ which envisaged eight ministers). Kossuth appeared on Batthyány's list as minister of finance.

Kossuth was apparently not satisfied with the offer; his statement on the afternoon of 23 March to the Circular Session reveals as much. Kossuth said that when County Pest had elected him deputy he had promised not to accept government office; thus he could not take up the post which had been assigned to him before receiving 'his senders' permission'.⁹ Mihály Horváth,

6 J. A. Blackwell *Magyarországi küldetései 1843–1851*, ed. Éva Haraszti-Taylor, Budapest, 1989, p. 174.

7 Széchenyi, instead of sitting with the magnates, had arranged to be elected to the Lower House to enable him to fight Kossuth's 'inflammatory agitation'.

8 Became Law III of 1848 on 11th April.

9 *KLÖM*, XI, pp. 690–91.

the historian, also minister in 1849, wrote that Kossuth wanted the interior portfolio; however Kossuth denied this in his memoirs in 1881.¹⁰ Yet it appears that contemporaries' accounts were not without foundation. When the palatine submitted to the king the ministerial list¹¹ for approval, he noted that Kossuth could be offered only finance or the interior 'because a less important post would satisfy neither him nor the country.' The future ministers and others advised the palatine that this should be finance, a post through which Kossuth would not acquire personal influence. In the interior, by contrast, his influence would be unrestricted, especially in the forthcoming parliamentary elections. Kossuth also viewed his position in the same way and, as the palatine noted, 'he, together with Szemere, will use all his power to replace the government, as he has explained to his friends in confidence.'¹² The Court accepted the palatine's arguments and on 7 April the king approved the list (which was identical with the one Batthyány had announced on 23 March).¹³

Ferdinand sanctioned the April Laws and dissolved the last diet on 11 April. The ministers took the oath and the first cabinet meeting was held the following day.¹⁴ Kossuth started energetically to organize his ministry to establish independent Hungarian government finance. Politicians assumed

10 *KLI*, II, pp. 269–71.

11 The ministerial list: President: Count Lajos Batthyány, Internal: Bertalan Szemere, Relations with Austria: Prince Pál Esterházy, Finance: Lajos Kossuth, Defence: Colonel Lázár Mészáros, Transport: Count István Széchenyi, Culture and Education: Baron József Eötvös, Agriculture and Industry: Gábor Klauzál, Justice: Ferencz Deák. See Urbán, *Batthyány iratai*, I, p. 158.

12 'Alle seine Gefährten, aber auch Judex Curiae und Tavernicus, halten dafür, das er bei den Inneren Angelegenheiten weit mehr Einfluss ausüben könnte, als es bei den "Finanzen" der Fall ist. Auf diesem Posten hat er keinen Einfluss auf Personen; ohne Controlle der anderen kann er nichts thun, und mit Wien kommt er in keinen persönlichen Verkehr. Dagegen hätte er bei den 'Inneren Angelegenheiten' alle Wahlen, besonders die Landtagswahlen, *im ganzen Lande*, so zu sagen *unumschränkt zur Disposition*; könnte das Ministerium bis zum nächsten Landtag unhaltbar machen, und das radicalste zusammenstellen, was bei den "Finanzen" rein unmöglich ist. Für die Richtigkeit deiser Ansicht spricht ferner der Umstand, dass Kossuth selbst mit aller Gewalt auf den Tausch des Ministeriums zwischen ihm und Szemere dringt, und auch die dafür sprechenden Gründe seinen vertrauteren Freunden mitgetheilt haben soll.' The palatine to Ferdinand on 30 April, *ibid.*, pp. 229–30.

13 *Ibid.*, p. 261. The king appointed Esterházy minister of 'contacts with the other parts of my joint empire'.

14 For the German translation of the minutes of the cabinet meeting on 12 April see *Die ungarischen Ministerratsprotokolle aus den Jahren 1848–1849* (hereafter *Ministerratsprotokolle*), ed., Erzsébet Fábián-Kiss, Budapest, 1998, pp. 16–18. Kossuth drafted most of the ministerial orders that implemented the cabinet decisions. See *KLÖM*, XII, pp. 27–31; Urbán, *Batthyány iratai*, pp. 309–10.

that the complexity of the subject would absorb all Kossuth's energy and that through finance Kossuth 'would not come into direct contact with Vienna'.¹⁵ It is perplexing that politicians in Vienna did not see the implications of Kossuth's appointment. Preservation of the unity of imperial finance, together with army unity, were the main concerns of the Staatskonferenz and later the Austrian ministry. In striving to attain Hungarian financial independence Kossuth had to reckon with resistance from Vienna, although for a while he tried to avoid conflict. When the Austrian minister restricted the export of silver coins and asked his Hungarian colleague to cooperate, Kossuth immediately complied.¹⁶ The measures introduced served common interests during the financial crisis which saw the virtual disappearance of silver coinage. But conflicts soon developed. Kossuth took over a Treasury which was nearly empty. He therefore almost immediately, on 24 April, banned the delivery of Treasury revenues (excise, post office, salt) to Vienna.¹⁷ On 1 May an unsigned official notice appeared in the *Pesti Hírlap* concerning negotiations between the ministry of finance and the Commercial Bank in Pest about the issue of gilt-edged securities, intimating that the incoming silver money from the selling of the treasury bonds could serve as the basis for issuing 'passive treasury bonds in lieu of silver money in their nominal value'.¹⁸

On 23 May Kossuth announced that economic stringency made it necessary to issue gilt-edged securities and appealed to all citizens to subscribe. The announcement emphasized that the Austrian banknotes in circulation remained fully convertible.¹⁹ What was implied by this announcement was that Kossuth hoped that the Austrian National Bank would be prepared to convert its banknotes to silver money. In fact, from March onwards conversion operated only by fits and starts. Not surprisingly, the *Pesti Hírlap*, the government's official gazette, published as early as 25 May, a government order banning the conversion of Austrian banknotes to silver.²⁰ By this move, within six weeks of the formation of the Batthyány ministry, the conflict between the two governments' fiscal policy became manifest.

15 István Sinkovics, 'Kossuth az önálló pénzügyek megteremtője', in *Kossuth Emlékkönyv*, ed., Zoltán I. Tóth, (hereafter *Kossuth*), Budapest, 1952, I, p. 113.

16 *KLÖM*, XII, pp. 44–45; pp. 221–22; pp. 633–34.

17 Batthyány had already issued an order to this effect on 3 April. See Urbán, *Batthyány iratai*, p. 234; Kossuth's order of April 24, *KLÖM*, XII, p. 70.

18 *KLÖM*, XII, pp. 98–99.

19 *KLÖM*, XII, pp. 177–191.

20 *KLÖM*, XII, p. 175.

The announcement on 23 May on the issue of the gilt-edged bonds also promised that one- and two-forint Hungarian banknotes would be in circulation within six weeks (these small denomination notes had not existed in the Monarchy before). In response, on 7 July, even before the appearance of the Hungarian banknotes, the Austrian minister declared that these banknotes were not legal tender in the Austrian Hereditary Lands, their issue being in conflict with the monopoly of the Austrian National Bank. For a while Kossuth did not respond to this move as his banknotes, because of technical hitches, appeared only on 14 August. On 10 August, however, contravening the decision by the ministerial council to exercise forbearance in the matter, Kossuth banned the acceptance of the one- and two-forint banknotes issued in great haste in May by the Austrian National Bank. He also severely restricted the export of silver coin from Hungary to the Austrian lands.²¹ A further sign of deteriorating relations with Vienna was that the National Assembly, in the course of the budget debate, approved after some discussion the issue of 61,000,000 forints in notes (that is, banknotes without bullion cover).²²

The issue of the paper money in Hungary and the breach of the Austrian National Bank monopoly were only further stages in the conflict between the two governments. In fact the conflict had begun when the nominated members of the Hungarian cabinet, even before they were confirmed in their appointment, rejected the Austrian proposal that Hungary should bear a proportion of the state debt, or rather a portion of the interest payments. This conflict was followed by the banning of the export of precious metals to Austria, the separation of the Hungarian camera (the treasury) and the mines from the imperial camera, as well as other conflicts in commerce and at the customs level.²³ It may appear from this list that the Austrian government was on the defensive and merely tried to preserve as much of the old fiscal system as it could, sometimes even by rejecting or misinterpreting the law sanctioned by the king. In fact, however, Vienna did more than resist. A telling example of this was the demand of the Austrian government to be reimbursed for the 100,000 forints it had transferred in June

21 On the whole process see Sinkovics, *Kossuth*, pp. 127–51; On Kossuth's order on silver coins, see *KLÖM*, XII, pp. 702–03.

22 Kossuth, on the issuing of the paper money: *KLÖM*, XII, pp. 792–99. The text of the Assembly's decision in *Az 1848/49 évi népképviseleti országgyűlés* (hereafter *Népképviseleti*) ed. János Beér, Budapest, 1954, p. 201. On the issue of the banknotes, see Sinkovics, *Kossuth*, pp. 152–73.

23 On the subordination of Hungarian finance to the imperial authorities, see Erzsébet F. Kiss, *Az 1848–1849-es magyar miniszteriumok*, Budapest, 1987, pp. 261–68.

to the regiments and *Militärgrenze* units under the command of Jelačić, the ban of Croatia, who had rejected any contact with the Hungarian government.²⁴ This amounted to a provocation as, obviously, the commander of Croatia could not expect supplies from a government which it refused to obey. The Austrian gesture proved an overt encouragement to Jelačić, a consequence of which was his attack on Pest.

‘Kossuth Hírlapja’

It was a peculiar feature of the revolution that a member of the government ran his own newspaper which bore his name. Kossuth had a clear plan: on 17 May he issued a public appeal for subscriptions. In the announcement he insisted that ‘the vast majority of the nation are monarchists’ and that the paper would cherish this sentiment. Kossuth also promised that the paper ‘will be an organ of national independence’. But the most significant, if rather prickly, message was that the attitude of the paper would be shaped by the development of Austro-Hungarian relations ‘on the basis of sincere friendship, and, if they prefer, mutual rights, independence and interests’.²⁵

As the paper’s title revealed, Kossuth saw the paper as his personal organ. Yet on June he wrote, in confidence, to Ferencz Pulszky, secretary of state in the ministry *a latere* in Vienna: ‘My *Hírlap* is about to be launched. It should assume importance in Hungarian politics.’ He asked Pulszky to secure the special delivery of foreign newspapers to himself (Batthyány received them a day before the postal service deliveries). Kossuth also asked his friend to find two correspondents who would regularly send newsletters from Vienna, including material on the work of the Hungarian ministry.²⁶ As it turned out, those two employees of the ministry whom Kossuth had actually suggested in the letter became his correspondents.

24 *KLÖM*, XII, pp. 398–99; pp. 636–38.

25 *KLÖM*, XII, pp. 150–53. The announcement was signed by Kossuth as the owner of the paper on 17 May. On 14 June an advertisement in the *Pesti Hírlap* stated that *Kossuth Hírlapja* would not be an official, government enterprise, but a ‘wholly private enterprise’.

26 *KLÖM*, XII, pp. 235–36. In the letter Kossuth also asked Pulszky to secure information on the working of the Austrian ministry and to find correspondents from France and Great Britain. Kossuth on the same day wrote to Dénes Pázmány in Frankfurt asking him to invite László Szalay, the government envoy, to send reports from there.

Kossuth Hírlapja was launched on 1 July, four days before the opening of the National Assembly. Kossuth produced three unsigned pieces for the first issue. The ‘Introduction’ was about the tasks of the Assembly and the position of the government. He announced that for the ministers, including himself, ‘staying in office was not a question of personal interest ... I am not fighting for my office.’ He might, he wrote, resign even before losing the support of the majority. At any rate, ministers did not want to entertain the public by playing musical chairs. He wanted to use the first issue of his paper to list the shortcomings (*fogyatkozásai*) of his office. His major admission was that he had declined to accept the offer by the Austrian bank of a 12,500,000 forint interest-free loan in banknotes, in return for the recognition of its banknote monopoly. This was not widely known and Kossuth was, in fact, boasting with his confession.²⁷ Another piece in the paper reviewed the Serbian insurrection in the South. Using his ‘inside knowledge’ of government business, Kossuth produced the text of the cease-fire concluded on 24 June. His comment was restrained but it gave the impression that Kossuth was not altogether pleased with the event. Indeed Péter Csernovics, the royal commissar who signed the cease-fire from the Hungarian side, was soon replaced by the government. The third article, suggesting that Kossuth’s paper would be the best informed on politics, reported that the palatine had returned from the court in Innsbruck on 29 June and that the king ‘would probably come to Buda in July,’ and commissioned the palatine to open the National Assembly. Even more important was the report of the cabinet meeting of the same day at which measures concerning the ‘Illyrian rebellion’ were discussed. As the capital was awash with rumours of Kossuth’s resignation over the matter, he announced:

We have been authorized to inform the public that the report that Kossuth has already resigned is not genuine, although his ill health will likely force him out of office.²⁸

The articles informed the readers on government policy as well as on Kossuth’s position in the cabinet and they reached a wider public than Kossuth’s speeches in the National Assembly.

27 Ibid., pp. 347–50.

28 *KLÖM*, XII, pp. 350–53. Széchenyi noted in his diary: ‘Gehe noch in Ministerrat bei Batthyány. Aufregung: Kossuth lemondott. — Deák behauptet, er ist perfide’. *Gróf Széchenyi István döblingi irodalmi hagyatéka*, ed. Árpád Károlyi, Budapest, 1922, (hereafter *Gróf Széchenyi*), I, p. 342.

In the 2 July issue, in an article on the ‘Illyrian rebellion’ (three weeks before Radetzky’s victory at Custozza!), Kossuth predicted Radetzky’s defeat, the loss of Lombardy and the beginning of the end of the Austrian Monarchy. The dynasty ‘should, with open heart, throw themselves into the arms of the Hungarians’ because Panslavism will not save it.²⁹ On 4 July the paper once again published three pieces by Kossuth. On the front page the article ‘Our relations with Austria’ alluded to a political group in Vienna which Kossuth characterized as ‘the men of reaction’ who planned to ‘declare war in the name of the emperor of Austria on the king of Hungary.’ But such a course would threaten the position of the imperial house because in both the north and the south two Slav states would come into being and Vienna would be isolated. The only way out for the dynasty was for Buda to become the seat of the Austrian House: ‘Our King should accept this and his throne in Buda will be elevated to the imperial seat of a great empire.’³⁰ Another piece referred vaguely to a note (which, however, the government had already received but had not yet made public)³¹ that the Austrian government ‘plans to send to the Hungarian ministry’ a request that it should come to an agreement with the Croats ‘at any price’, otherwise the Austrian government could not stay neutral in the matter. But, Kossuth argued,

the Austrian emperor and the Hungarian king are the same person and by virtue of this unity we are connected through the Pragmatic Sanction which in a word means: common friend, common enemy.

The rider was, ‘if Austria renounces our alliance, when we really need allies, we shall have to look elsewhere — and in all probability we shall find some.’³² The third article informed its readers that members of the National Assembly had met in the lodgings of Kossuth, who had been

29 *KLÖM*, XII, pp. 355–57. Széchenyi noted in his diary: ‘Kossuth 2tes Blatt wie perfide!’, Károlyi, *Gróf Széchenyi*, I, p. 343. Széchenyi referred to Kossuth’s journal as his second paper because another (radical) daily was also considered to follow his line.

30 *KLÖM*, XII, pp. 377–79.

31 The text of the note by the Austrian government (29 June) about the possible ending of its neutrality in the Hungarian-Croatian conflict is given in Urbán, *Batthyány iratai*, I, pp. 817–19.

32 *KLÖM*, XII, p. 381. This is an allusion to the planned alliance with Germany which László Szalay, the Hungarian envoy at Frankfurt, was to accomplish. See Eszter Waldapfel, *A független magyar külpolitika 1848–1849*, Budapest, 1962, pp. 11–45; Gábor Erdődy, *A magyar kormányzat európai látóköre 1848-ban*, Budapest, 1988, pp. 42–48.

asked by the Cabinet ‘to be in direct contact with the members.’ Kossuth informed them that the government wanted to meet all the demands of Croatia that ‘are not in conflict with the lawful historical connections’ between the two countries. But, in the event that Croatia persisted in rebellion, the nation had to defend the rights of the Hungarian crown. The ministry would request from the Assembly an increase of the regular army strength to 200,000 men of whom 40,000 should be recruited immediately. With the Croats it would be, ‘Either the olive branch of brotherly reconciliation or a fight to the death’.³³

The most important article of these days appeared on 5 July, the day on which the National Assembly opened. Kossuth, exceptionally, signed his long leader on the tasks of the Assembly. Its first duty, he explained, was to grant money and provide soldiers for the country’s defence. Many repeated his dictum:

If we are prepared, we shall not be attacked; if we are not, we shall be. The peace of the weak depends on grace; the peace of the strong carries its own security.

The lack of defending forces encouraged Croat defiance and the Serbian insurrection, and it boosted Viennese attitudes that aimed to bring an end to Hungarian independence in finance and the army. As the last diet had not made provisions, the government had been obliged to resort to (voluntary) recruitment. The nation’s representatives ought to recognize the country’s position and act appropriately; it was not the government alone which bore the responsibility. He was prepared for a fight in parliament — not for his office but for the well-being of the country. He did not want to wage war on anybody; he wanted an honest peace but not the peace of servitude: ‘Thus I have to cry a hundred times to the nation: prepare for a life and death struggle with all your might.’ He rounded off with a warning to the moderate majority of the Assembly: ‘I am with you if this be your policy; if not, I’ll be against you.’³⁴

After this sharp and definitive piece, Kossuth informed his readers day by day on aspects of government policy and his own attitudes, although now more coolly. On 6 July he asked whether Hungary could counter the growing influence of Russia in Wallachia. Yes, if the country had an embassy at the Sublime Porte.³⁵ On 7 July, under the odd title ‘Compassion and Equality’ Kossuth described the hatred towards Hungary in the

³³ *KLÖM*, XII, pp. 353–55.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 360–64.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 392–95.

Viennese press which demanded payments for debts that Hungary had not incurred and which threatened war: 'The financial aristocracy in Vienna wants to restore its power by arousing the hatred of the people.' In these troubled times Hungary needed liberty, order, money, soldiers but also honesty and discipline: 'The people will rely on the strong and are afraid to join the weak'.³⁶ On 9 July, Kossuth wrote sympathetically about the revolution in Wallachia. Alas, he explained, this sympathy was not reciprocated by the Romanian side. Hungary hoped that peace could be preserved and that the Romanians would not rise against us. But it was also Hungary's task to help them, through diplomacy, and to save them from possible Russian intervention.³⁷

On 11 July 'Our position on the Austrian ministry' reported the fall of the Pillersdorf ministry. What was previously only a threat, wrote Kossuth, namely the end of Austrian neutrality in the Croat conflict, had in fact now happened. 'We know from reliable sources' — wrote Kossuth, thus disclaiming provenance of the article — 'that our ministry responded to this announcement as it was bound to do'. After reviewing the Austrian note, Kossuth disclosed that the Pillersdorf cabinet had sent 100,000 forints to Jelačić and had demanded reimbursement from the Hungarian government. But the minister of finance firmly rejected the claim and would so report to parliament. While the note from the government of Austria was an attack on Hungarian independence, he hoped that there would be no problems with the Austrian nation.³⁸ On 12 July Kossuth explained why General Hrabovszky, Commander of Pétervárad (Petrovaradin), appointed royal commissar by the palatine to introduce measures to check Jelačić, had been unsuccessful.³⁹ On 14 July his article 'The Proclamation of the Slavs' first meeting to the peoples of Europe' concerned the Congress in Prague. In reviewing the Proclamation Kossuth observed that 'the incessant flirting with the Muscovite power' would not help achieve liberty for the Slavs.⁴⁰ On 15 July, his article 'Possibilities' was a curious mixture of realistic calculation and wholly abstract meanderings. We as a nation, Kossuth argued, do not represent a threat either to the Austrian Germans or to the Slavs, yet neither could we support them, because their hatred of us alienated us from them. Now that

36 Ibid., pp. 385–89.

37 Ibid., pp. 401–03.

38 Ibid., pp. 418–24. The text of the Hungarian note in: Ibid., pp. 374–76.

39 Ibid., pp. 395–97. Hrabovszky on 10 July asked to be relieved of his duties as commissar.

40 Ibid., pp. 442–44. Kossuth indicated that his account was based on an article in the *Prager Zeitung*.

Archduke John had been elected Governor of Germany, the National Assembly might move from Frankfurt to Vienna. Kossuth hoped that the 'leading lights' in Austria would not inspire Germany to embark on a mission of conquest. Should this happen, however, and should they forget that the rights of the Hungarian Holy Crown did not belong to Austria and, thereby, to the German empire, 'we would have to bear the weight of a mighty Germany which has until now been our friend.' This was only a vague, unlikely possibility as the interest of the Germans was now the consolidation of unity. But the 'rampant ambition' of the reactionary forces in Austria might make unity illusory. The ministry in Austria might have fallen but the danger had not yet abated. A Hungary which was strong morally, materially, legally and in its defence would acquire allies; the weak would only generate conquerors.⁴¹

Kossuth's articles in the paper must have created unease among his colleagues. József Bajza, the responsible editor, announced in the issue of 15 July that although Lajos Kossuth was the owner of the paper he was not its editor; he was responsible only for the articles he actually signed: 'He will use the paper as his organ to address the public whenever he thinks it necessary' which was likely to happen even more frequently in the future. 'But', Bajza wrote, 'only articles that appear under his name should be attributed to him'. Otherwise he, Bajza, was solely responsible for the contents of the paper.⁴²

The article, which appeared on 18 July and which discussed the new Wessenberg cabinet, was signed by Kossuth. He registered his lack of confidence in the new cabinet. Archduke John, appointed the emperor's *alter ego* for the Austrian Hereditary Lands, would stay in Frankfurt; the court was in Innsbruck and thus 'Vienna is without a head.' Therefore, he went on, Ferdinand should come to Buda 'from where Vienna can be governed — and neither Vienna nor Buda could be governed from anywhere else.' The National Assembly would soon send a deputation to the Court to invite the king to Buda. Then, unexpectedly, perhaps echoing Bajza's announcement, Kossuth strove to explain himself and took responsibility for his expressed views: 'I was not born a diplomat nor a minister if that requires the concealment of attitudes; I say what I think'. Apparently, Kossuth went on, the new Austrian prime minister was surprised that they in Pest were flabbergasted about the Austrian statement 'ending

41 Ibid., pp. 448–50.

42 *Kossuth Hírlapja*, 1848, 15 July, p. 163. After this announcement Kossuth regularly signed his articles 'Sz. F.' when he did not wish them to appear under his own name.

their neutrality'. But shouldn't words be followed by deeds? Shouldn't it give pause that Vienna had sent cash to Jelačić, even though he had been suspended from office by the monarch? The thrust of the message was, thus, that the Hungarians were not to be intimidated by Jelačić who would never be able to take back to Vienna from Pest control of the army and finance.⁴³ In another (unsigned) piece Kossuth complained that the government bonds were not doing well because they were unfamiliar, although they were more advantageous to keep than banknotes since they paid interest.⁴⁴

On 20 July, at the beginning of the debate over the 'Reply to the Speech on the Throne', there appeared Kossuth's unsigned article on 'Our Foreign Affairs' which expressed decidedly personal views. 'We should not deceive ourselves', he began. 'We have foreign affairs but do not possess our own minister of foreign affairs.' Prince Paul Esterházy, according to the law, dealt with appointments, ennoblements, the granting of titles (reserved to the king) and he exerted influence (*befoly*) over matters that were common between Hungary and the other Lands.⁴⁵ Our envoys abroad did not have diplomatic status — a position that was 'still to be achieved by the nation'. The law on foreign affairs was 'flawed, vague and badly drafted' and Hungary would soon have to work out policies towards its potential enemies and friends. The present situation could not endure, argued Kossuth. A law should be passed so that the envoys of the Hungarian foreign minister were attached to His Majesty's ambassadors and would 'exercise influence in all the relations of common interest' between Hungary and the other Lands and 'represent responsibly the country's independent ministry'. This was how, Kossuth explained, Hungary should have an independent minister for foreign affairs and a diplomatic corps.⁴⁶ There is no evidence that the plan was ever brought

43 *KLÖM*, XII, pp. 458–61.

44 *Ibid.*, pp. 464–66.

45 *Ibid.*, pp. 599–602. Paragraph 13 of Law III 1848 referred to the minister *a latere*, influencing the matters 'in all the relations of common interest' with the other Lands of the Monarchy. The palatine in his submission of the ministerial list to Ferdinand used 'Relations with Austria' (see note 11 above) and the king in the letter of appointment used 'contacts with the other parts of my joint empire' (see note 13 above). Yet after the appointment Esterházy was designated in Hungarian, and also Austrian (!), government papers as minister of foreign affairs.

46 *Ibid.*, XII, pp. 599–602. Kossuth stated in his report to his electorate on 16 April that the April Laws did not contain all that the nation wanted but they 'will provide the basis for future developments', *KLÖM*, XI, p. 742. It is not quite clear what he meant by the 'future' in April; nor is it clear whether or not he seriously thought in July that the monarch's acceptance of a revision of the April Laws could be secured.

to the council of ministers, although the surviving (incomplete) minutes reveal that a decision was made on 26 June that Hungarian consuls should be attached to the Monarchy's ambassadors in the Balkans and that Esterházy should contact his opposite number in Vienna over the matter.⁴⁷ Even though this initiative was followed up, the negotiations did not get very far.⁴⁸

Apart from a vivid account of the defence of Versec (Vršac) against Serb insurrectionists,⁴⁹ Kossuth's articles did not appear in his paper for some days. When news came through that on the instructions of the Frankfurt parliament, the Austrian army would fly the black-gold and red imperial colours, Kossuth re-emerged on 30 July with a substantial, signed piece that partly repeated familiar points on Austro-Hungarian relations and partly made new ones. Because Hungary was legally independent of Austria, he began, the Hungarian army 'should have stood on its national feet in the past, but even more so now, as the Austrian army is replaced by the German imperial army'.⁵⁰ Turning to the thorny question of whether military assistance should be given to the imperial army fighting in Italy, (a question which came up in the Address debate), Kossuth produced the cryptic claim that, as he had made clear in parliament, he was prepared to support the declared policy of the government but 'beyond that I would not go under any circumstances' (more of this later). Kossuth then returned to the idea of establishing 'separate Hungarian ambassadors' abroad by changing the law. Finally, in connection with the deputation which was about to leave for Innsbruck to 'reconfirm our loyalty to His Majesty and ask him to come to Buda', he argued that the monarch could not rule the country from Innsbruck: 'Our lord and king can be sovereign only in Buda'. And as Ferdinand was not expected to visit the country to prorogue the summer session of parliament, Kossuth unexpectedly floated an idea: 'His Majesty should grant us a junior king in the person of Franz Joseph'.⁵¹ The suggestion was unrealistic and it was not followed up. In making it, Kossuth was perhaps trying to mitigate the criticism he levelled at the antagonistic policies of the Austrian government. It was in response to these policies that the National Assembly declared on 3 August:

47 Fábián-Kiss, *Ministerratsprotokolle*, pp. 57–58.

48 Urbán, *Batthyány iratai*, pp. 982, 1128.

49 *KLÖM*, XII, pp. 613–15.

50 *Ibid.*, p. 641.

51 *Ibid.*, pp. 640–44. The institution of *junior rex* was a short-lived experiment in the 13th century.

If the Austrian government were to come into military conflict with Frankfurt, the centre of German power over the question of unification, it could not count on Hungary's support against Frankfurt.⁵²

This was a last minute amendment to the main motion proposed by the radical leader Pál Nyáry after a long speech made by Kossuth. As the passage clashed head on with the Pragmatic Sanction, the ministerial council, disturbed by its implications, discussed on 6 August measures to limit the damage. His colleagues and the palatine held Kossuth, and particularly the influence of the *Kossuth Hírlapja*, responsible for the blunder.

As on previous occasions, Kossuth offered his resignation which (as on other previous occasions) was not accepted. Then Kossuth promised to be 'more discreet' in the future.⁵³ This could have been understood as a promise not to disclose information which the cabinet wanted to keep from the public. Or it could have meant that on government policy he would refrain from expressing his own views. In fact, in the ten articles published up to the end of the month, he showed more restraint. The policy line of the journal towards the Austrian government and Jelačić did not change but there is no trace of the paper veering towards Kossuth's more radical views in order to exert influence on government policy.

Kossuth in the National Assembly

Kossuth Hírlapja played an important role in the formation of public opinion in July and August but Kossuth's predominance is even more in evidence in his role in the parliament convoked on 5 July.

The cabinet asked Kossuth on 8 July to act as rapporteur in respect of its proposal on recruits and subsidies.⁵⁴ Three days later, an apparently sick Kossuth climbed the rostrum and first in a faint voice, then with accelerating velocity, unleashed a magnificent speech of three and a half

52 Dénes Pap, *A magyar nemzetgyűlés Pesten 1848-ban*, 2 vols., Pest, 1866, I, p. 314; Károlyi, *Gróf Széchenyi*, I, pp. 365–66; *KLI*, VIII, pp. 83–84; Károlyi, *Batthyány*, I, pp. 364–68; Beér, *Népképviseleti*, pp. 177–78, the Upper House decision on 14 August on the German alliance did not follow the other House's declaration, see *ibid.*, p. 686.

53 Károlyi, *Batthyány*, I, pp. 367–68. Széchenyi's diary referred to Kossuth's promise made at the Ministerial Council on 6 August: 'Sein Zeitung hat er versprochen mit Discretion zu Handhaben'. Károlyi, *Széchenyi*, I, p. 367.

54 Fábián-Kiss, *Ministerratsprotokolle*, p. 61.

hours to demand appropriation of 42,000,000 forints for 200,000 recruits. When he finished, the leader of the radicals, Pál Nyáry broke the silence of the spellbound audience with a cry: 'We grant it!' Thereupon the entire chamber rose and applauded the orator.⁵⁵

The most sensitive subject in the Address debate (the first business of every parliament in Hungary) was the question of 'Italian aid'. In the spring Piedmont, in order to assist the insurrection in Lombardy against Austrian rule, had attacked Austria, which therefore waged a defensive war and, by virtue of the Pragmatic Sanctions, *casus foederis* obtained for Hungary. The government was put on the spot because public sympathy for Italian liberty was strong. Kossuth forcefully argued in the cabinet on 5 July that the Speech from the Throne, to be delivered by the palatine, should contain only the statement that 'the war in Lombardy-Venetia could not yet be concluded'. The cabinet, after heated arguments, set very stiff conditions for assisting the Monarchy's Italian army.⁵⁶

This was the background to the debate on the Address draft in the House on 20 July. Kossuth was the dominant player in the issue of Italian aid (which eventually sealed the fate of the April Laws). His formula came in the Speech from the Throne: he set the conditions of Italian aid, drew up himself the minutes of the Ministerial Council meeting, and presented in the House the decision of the cabinet (also his own draft). Before getting down to the issue of 'Italian aid' Kossuth reviewed recent developments in the Croatian conflict. Then he warned the House: it could either follow principles or take into account the political circum-

55 English translation in General Klapka, *Memoirs of the War of Independence in Hungary*, London, 1850, II, pp. 246–73; and see Mihály Horváth, *Magyarország függetlenségi harczának története 1848 és 1849-ben*, ed., Miklós Puky, Geneva, 1865, I, pp. 311–316; György Szabad, *Kossuth irányadása*, Budapest, 2002, pp. 136–40.

56 The decision on the Italian aid: 'Indem das ungarische Ministerium aber für den Fall der sicheren Wiederherstellung der Ordnung und des Friedens im Lande und der Garantie der selbständigen materiellen und moralischen Unversehrtheit des Landes den Schutz des Monarchen gegen äußere Angriffe im Sinne der Pragamatischen Sanktion verspricht, wünscht es klar festzuhalten, daß es dagegen, daß dieses Versprechen als seine Absicht erklärt wird, an der Unterdrückung der italienischen Nation in Lombardo-Venetian teilzunehmen, klar protestiert und in dieser Angelegenheit nur dazu im obigen Falle Hilfe zu bieten bereit ist, daß mit der lombardisch-venezianischen Nation der Abschluß eines Friedens und einer Vereinbarung erreicht wird, die einerseits der Würde des Königs und andererseits den Rechten, der Freiheit und den angemessenen Wünschen der italienischen Nation entsprechen.', Fábián-Kiss, *Ministerratsprotokolle*, p. 60; *KLÖM*, XII, pp. 382–84; Urbán, *Batthyány iratai*, pp. 873–77.

stances. As he explained, 'Politics is the science of exigencies'. If Hungary disregarded everything else and only wanted to support the Italian revolt then it would have to support the Croat revolt as well. This was the conclusion that followed from the politics of principle. Personally he had great sympathy for the Italian nation but this was his own 'private feeling'. As a minister he wanted to report the policy of the government. Then he read out the government's decision (his own draft). One of the conditions of giving aid to the Austrian ministry was that it could be done only after the Serbian revolt had been put down and the threat from Croatia had ceased. Another condition was that Hungarian recruits could not be used to suppress the Italian nation. After making more sympathetic noises about the Italians, Kossuth diluted the cabinet decision even further. It was not the sending of soldiers to Italy that was important but rather the 'moral pressure' put on the Austrian government to make a peace which 'satisfies the wishes of the Italian nation and the dignity of the throne'. The radicals in the House, knowing that Kossuth's policy differed from that of the rest of the cabinet, demanded a written statement on government policy.

Kossuth accepted the request and the following day he read out the formula with the following preface: 'I should report that what I said yesterday was my personal view and what I am reading out today has been agreed by the whole cabinet.'⁵⁷ The text he submitted followed the minutes of the ministerial council of 5 July. Yet in one respect a new condition crept in: should it be impossible to establish peace 'with free constitutional institutions', the territories 'beyond a strategic line' might secede from the Monarchy.⁵⁸ After further adverse comments on the government's policy by the radicals, the House accepted on 22 July the submitted text on 'Italian aid' (233 for, 36 against). Contemporaries all believed that it was only because of Kossuth's forceful interventions that the cabinet set such stiff conditions for 'Italian aid'. Minister president Batthyány was indignant with Kossuth especially for presenting first the

57 Pap, *Nemzetgyűlés*, I, p. 180.

58 For July 20 *KLÖM*, XII, pp. 588–99; for July 21 pp. 602–12; Pap, *Nemzetgyűlés*, I, pp. 133–219; Károlyi, *Batthyány*, I, pp. 353–63. Istvan Deak writes: 'Batthyány was furious and again threatened to resign, a gesture which Kossuth did not consider advantageous at that time. So on July 21 he recanted publicly, reverting to the government's original motion, which of course had been his very own. Over the furious opposition of the radicals, and amidst great confusion — for in the torrent of his words, no one quite knew what Kossuth really wanted — the House passed the government's initial motion, 233 to 36.' Istvan Deak, *The Lawful Revolution*, New York, 1979, p. 146.

government policy line and then dissociating himself from it. That was why the council of ministers, held on 20 July after the meeting of the House, obliged Kossuth to come clean.⁵⁹ On the other hand, the cabinet met Kossuth's new condition that if no agreement was reached, the Monarchy should be prepared to give up some Italian territories. The story of the 'Italian aid' amply illustrates on Kossuth's ability to use the National Assembly, notwithstanding the government's solid moderate majority, to push through, with the help of the radicals, his own agenda.⁶⁰

Kossuth's stamina was legendary. His ministerial papers reveal the wide ranging measures he introduced in finance and defence. In addition, he carried on with extensive journalism, a part of which we have seen. He was also on his feet in parliament every day. He presented the budget; on 26 July he submitted a bill on the use of crown property for settlers; on 24 August the bill on the issuing of paper currency. Instead of listing his contributions, a single example will show Kossuth's tactical skills in parliament.

Lázár Mészáros, the minister of defence presented his bill on the creation of the Hungarian army on 21 July. After it went through various committees, which came up with a large number of amendments, the central committee of the House drafted an alternative bill which was distributed on 31 July. The debate was, however, postponed by the government, until 6 August, when the Austrian regiments were scheduled to adopt the German imperial colours. It was thought that this would change the position of the Austrian army and attitudes in Vienna which would in turn affect attitudes in Pest. But the government did not want to admit that this was the reason for postponement and dispatched the minister of defence to inspect the camps in the south, set up to fight the Serbian insurrectionists. The debate could commence only after the minister's return to Pest.⁶¹ The minister's bill used the regular army system for expansion. The regiments stationed in Hungary were to be complemented by new recruits. By contrast in the bill of the central committee, of the planned 40,000 recruits only 12,000 would have been recruited to complement the army regiments *in esse*. The rest (i.e. the

59 Horváth, *Függetlenségi harc*, I, pp. 324–25; Károlyi, *Batthyány*, I, pp. 360–63.

60 Mihály Horváth wrote: 'It clearly emerged from tense debates over the Address that, although his policies were intransigent, Kossuth because of his oratorical powers was able to bend as he pleased the views of the majority of the House. For this reason whenever he was at loggerheads with his colleagues in the cabinet he could count on the support of the majority (in parliament). In this way his views tended to prevail even in the cabinet,' Horváth, *Függetlenségi harc*, I, p. 326.

61 Urbán, *Batthyány*, pp. 536–48.

majority) were to form new battalions ‘whose language of service and command, flag, dress and insignia would be Hungarian.’ Even this proposal, backed by the majority of the House, did not satisfy the radicals. They hoped that Kossuth, instead of supporting the central committee’s compromise, would follow up his own article of 30 July, and insist on the creation of an entirely *magyar lábra állított* (Hungarian in character) army. After all, Kossuth had published these views in his paper in the full knowledge of the ministerial and the central committee’s bills.

After the debate began on the bill in the House on 16 August, it irritated the radicals that Kossuth did not speak for three days. When at last he broke his silence on 19 August, he began with the principle that Law III of 1848 restored Hungary’s independent government, and that army organization should, therefore, reflect the country’s position. There were two ways to achieve this. Either the regular army should be reorganized *magyar lábra* (i.e. à la hongroise) and then enlarged by new recruits; or a new army, organized *magyar lábra*, should be created which, not having been instructed in the old ways, would not need to be transformed later. There was no difference of principle, Kossuth went on, between the minister’s and the House’s bill. The new army would not oppose the dynasty and would not be organized with the purpose of seceding from Austria. On the contrary — went on Kossuth, launching into loyalist rhetoric — the army would be ‘the most secure mainstay of the House of Austria ... The Hungarian nation wants independence and even in the heart of the common monarch, a coordinate and not a subordinate position’ (thunderous acclaim in the House).

The outburst of rhetoric was, however, followed by a climbdown. Instead of setting up new regiments for the new recruits, Kossuth in essence supported the plan of the Central Committee and sought a compromise with the ministerial draft of which, he said, he did not approve (perhaps because, he admitted modestly, he did not know enough about the subject). In other circumstances, he surmised, they might fight it out, but not now, as the army was already facing the enemy. The circumstances required a compromise which he was, reluctantly, prepared to make, hoping that the minister would do the same. Kossuth, speaking for the government, made parliament accept the Central Committee’s compromise in army organization. His success was limited. On 22 August, at the end of the debate, the radicals demanded a roll call which went 226 for and 117 against Kossuth’s proposal.⁶²

62 *KLÖM*, XII, pp. 755–61.

Why did Kossuth abandon his radical army plan, jeopardizing his popularity? One of the reasons could be that the officers of the regular army, facing the enemy in the south, might have felt that the introduction of an army organized entirely *magyar lábra* bypassed them and so undermined their morale. This had to be avoided. Also, Kossuth probably thought that Vienna would not let even the compromise bill become law, and that this would induce the moderate majority to accept a more radical plan. In addition, Kossuth could count on the probability of restoring his popularity with the radicals (who had voted against the bill) as he had received permission from the minister of defence on 17 August to set up his own armed unit of volunteers. Organized at short notice and promoted in *Kossuth Hírlapja*, for a while the group even bore Kossuth's name.⁶³

Kossuth in the September Crisis

Neither the moderate articles in his journal published in August nor the compromise on the army bill should be taken to suggest that Kossuth had in any sense moderated his views either on Croat-Hungarian or on Austro-Hungarian relations. It appears that Batthyány's unsuccessful visit to Vienna at the end of July and his fruitless meeting with Jelačić finally convinced Kossuth that there was no chance of a peaceful outcome in the two conflicts. He now began to withdraw his support for the government which he thought was tame, wanting peace at any price. For the time being it is only in confidential correspondence that we can see the change in his position. Kossuth wrote to László Csány, royal commissar at the river Drava, 'The ministry will have to change ... Either I resign or it has to become more energetic.' Later, he wrote, 'we have to shake off this enervating weight pressing on us — and raise ourselves, with full force...and not be despondent about the rightness of our cause'.⁶⁴

Charged with an insuperable task by the council of ministers, Batthyány and Deák travelled to Vienna on 27 August to secure the royal sanction to the bill on the army recruits and the issuing of paper money. Neither the two ministers nor the rest of the cabinet expected success. Still, they had no choice but to try. Kossuth wrote in confidence to Csány

63 Kossuth's dispositions concerning the unit, *KLÖM*, XII, pp. 733–35; Aladár Urbán, 'Kossuth szabadcsapata 1848. őszén'. *Hadtörténelmi Közlemények*, 1988/4, pp. 638–65 (German summary).

64 *KLÖM*, XII, pp. 722–24. In the letter Kossuth also gave advice to Csányi on military tactics.

on 31 August: 'It is possible that the Croats will, temporarily, even occupy the capital.' He made known to Csány that the cabinet had decided to offer secession to the Croats.

I am willing to team up with the devil — although never with the 'schwarz-gelb' reactionary forces — even if I am torn to pieces. But that will not be my fate. I shall set the fatherland on its feet once the shilly-shallying (*diplomatizáló*) policy comes to an end.

And, in closing: 'I am very ill, I lie in bed for hours, motionless. But the danger is hardening my shattered nerves. I do not despair. Hold on just a little longer. This nation will not perish'.⁶⁵

The political conflict came to a head on 31 August when the king sent to Palatine István the *Denkschrift* prepared by the Austrian government, in which it questioned the monarch's right to devolve the powers of independent finance and defence on Hungary without the consent of the empire's other provinces. Kossuth knew of the *Denkschrift*, which had not yet been published, when he made a stand in the National Assembly on 4 September. In a (by his standards) rather short speech an apparently sick Kossuth pointed out that the Croats rebelled in the name of the monarch, that royal orders to restrain Jelačić could not be enforced, and that the government was, he believed, 'obstructed by the circles surrounding His Majesty.' Unless this situation changed 'the nation will be obliged to provide temporarily such executive power ... as will derive the source of its dispositions from the danger to the fatherland rather than from the law'. This threat was coupled with a proposal: a deputation of a hundred members should be sent to the king by parliament, asking him to set a date for his visit to Buda in order to strengthen the monarchy by giving him support 'to retain his throne if he wished to retain it'.⁶⁶ Parliament agreed.

The deputation travelled to the Schönbrunn on 5 September. Court protocol delayed the audience with Ferdinand. Only after the deputation removed from the submission passages that were objected to, did the audience take place, four days later. The royal reply was platitudinous.⁶⁷

65 *KLÖM*, XII, pp. 853–55.

66 *Ibid.*, pp. 881–86. In fact Kossuth put forward several proposals, see Beér, *Népképviseleti*, pp. 213–15. For the *Denkschrift* see *Sammlung der für Ungarn erlassenen Allerhöchsten Manifeste und Proklamationen, dann der Kundmachungen der Oberbefehlshaber der kaiserlichen Armee in Ungarn*, Ofen, 1850, Anhang, pp. 5–19.

67 For the texts of the submission and the royal reply see Beér, *Népképviseleti*, pp. 216–18; for a summary of events see Urbán, *Batthyány*, pp. 603–52.

The deputation, accompanied by the equally unsuccessful Batthyány and Deák, returned to Pest on 10 September. The Batthyány ministry resigned on the following day. Parliament put Kossuth in charge of government. Resolute as ever, he immediately and successfully proposed a decision on the bills of the army recruits and the issuing of money that the monarch had failed to approve.⁶⁸ Palatine István did not accept parliament's decision to entrust Kossuth with the formation of the government and instead charged Batthyány with this task on 12 September. Kossuth at once accepted the decision and gave his support to Batthyány.⁶⁹ Then the news arrived in Pest that the Croat regiments had begun to invade Hungary on the previous day. While Kossuth was still insisting on formalities, the court did its best to prolong the government crisis: the king failed to approve the palatine's nomination of Batthyány and requested to see first the list of the proposed ministers. The manifest lack of confidence induced Batthyány to reconsider his position in parliament on 16 September. The whole House, and especially the radicals, however, insisted (as Vienna wanted only to prolong the uncertainty) that Batthyány should make the sacrifice and stay, which he agreed to do.⁷⁰ Although he was not the first to suggest that Batthyány should stay on, Kossuth went along with the House; and from about this time on the radicals regarded the former minister of finance as 'one of them.'

Jelačić's army attacked Hungary on 11 September without declaring war; the intervention seemed to have been timed to coincide with the government crisis in Pest. Brigadier-General Count Ádám Teleki, the commander of the Hungarian forces at the river Drava, got cold feet on hearing the news of political turmoil in Pest. Csány, the royal commissar, reported that Teleki was not prepared to confront the Croats fighting under the imperial flag, as their commander had sworn the same oath as he had. Batthyány then asked parliament to commission the palatine, who in earlier times had also been captain-general of the Land, to take over the leadership of the retreating army. The palatine obliged. On Kossuth's initiative parliament then appointed three members to form the entourage of his royal highness. Towards the end of the late night sitting, on Kossuth's proposal, the House also resolved to elect a committee to review the defence measures taken by the acting premier, who was without ministers, to avoid the glare of publicity before the whole House.⁷¹ President Dénes Pázmány

68 *KLÖM*, XII, pp. 907–19; for parliament's measures see pp. 922–24.

69 *Ibid.*, pp. 931–32.

70 *KLÖM*, XII, pp. 968–71, Urbán, *Batthyány iratai*, pp. 1367–73.

71 *KLÖM*, XII, pp. 956–62.

proposed that each member nominate six persons. On 21 September the president announced the outcome: both Kossuth and Pál Nyáry, the leading radical, were elected to the committee of six. This committee met Batthyány every evening between 22 and 27 September and formed the nucleus of the Committee of National Defence. On 27 September Batthyány left Pest for the army camp to meet Count Lamberg.⁷²

The critical event in what Hungarian historians refer to as the 'September turning-point', was the assassination of Lieutenant General Count Ferencz Lamberg, who had, without ministerial countersignature, been appointed royal commissar plenipotentiary and commander-in-chief of all the armed forces in Hungary and the invading Croat army, and charged with the restoration of peace. On 28 September the news spread in Pest that Lamberg had secretly arrived in Buda and would have Pest bombarded. The town was in turmoil because the invading Croat army was only two days' march away. Lamberg was already in the news because parliament on the evening of 27 September had resolved that his appointment was unlawful and had forbidden all civil and military authorities from cooperating with him. The resolution, initiated by Kossuth, was printed at night and reached the public in the morning. Lamberg arrived in Buda without a military escort in a hackney-carriage in civilian clothes to look for the minister, but Batthyány had already left for the army camp. Lamberg was recognized by a mob on the pontoon bridge between Pest and Buda and was viciously murdered.⁷³

Batthyány had actually left for the camp where he hoped to find Lamberg in order to countersign his royal appointment. The radicals in parliament rejected this course; they did not believe that Lamberg would restrain the advancing Croats and restore order.⁷⁴ The leading radical, László Madarász, went down by train to the Great Plain on 24 September to bring Kossuth back to Pest to lead the attack on Batthyány's policy.

72 *KLÖM*, XII, pp. 657–62; Aladár Urbán, 'A Honvédelmi Bizottmány megválasztása, 1848. szeptember 16–21,' *Hadtörténelmi Közlemények*, 2001/2–3, pp. 361–85 (English summary).

73 For the sitting on 27 September see *KLÖM*, XIII, pp. 39–43. For the resolution of the House see Beér, *Népképviseleti*, pp. 254–55. For the murder, Aladár Urbán 'Népítélet Lamberg felett', *Századok*, 1996/5, pp. 1063–1115 (English summary).

74 Hungarian historians regard Lamberg's appointment as an unconstitutional and hostile move, see György Spira 'Polgári forradalom (1848–1849)' in *Magyarország története 1848–1890*, ed. László Katus, Budapest, 1979, pp. 257–58; 'It was perhaps unconstitutional and counterrevolutionary.[...] Why, then, the appointment of a new supreme commander with authority over both the Hungarian and Croatian armies, and with the specific task of enforcing immediate armistice?' Deak, *Lawful Revolution*, p. 171.

And, indeed, Kossuth initiated and acted as rapporteur for the House's resolution against Lamberg. Again, Kossuth proposed on 29 September that in the absence of the acting prime minister the executive power should, as a temporary measure, be exercised by the six-member committee elected earlier to assist Batthyány, which was henceforth called the Committee of National Defence. The task of the committee, pending the return of Batthyány, was the organization of defence and the maintenance of order.⁷⁵

On the same day Kossuth returned to the Great Plain to carry on with recruitment while Batthyány, on hearing of Lamberg's assassination, went to Vienna to mitigate the damage at the court. As he was unsuccessful, he finally resigned on 2 October. The Committee of National Defence functioned without Kossuth until 7 October. Meanwhile, the king ordered the dissolution of parliament and appointed Jelačić royal plenipotentiary and commander-in-chief of all the armed forces. Kossuth arrived back in Pest on 7 September when the House discussed the royal manifestos. At Kossuth's behest, the National Assembly resolved that the royal manifestos were unlawful, according to the April Laws, parliament could not be dissolved unless the budget had been passed for the following year — which it had not been). Next day, the House declared that 'as long as the country does not have a lawfully recognized government' the executive power was to be exercised by the Committee of National Defence whose chairman, Lajos Kossuth, was elected by general acclamation.⁷⁶ With this move Kossuth reached the peak of his power in 1848. In the following year, after the success of the Spring Campaign and the Declaration of Independence, he became Governor-president of Hungary.

The question is frequently raised whether Kossuth was a loyal subject of the Habsburg monarch, impelled to disobedience by the violation of the April Laws or, alternatively, whether his aim was from the start secession from the Monarchy in order to attain complete independence, and that this

75 For the resolution of parliament on 28 September see Beér, *Népképviseleti*; for Kossuth's proposal on 29 September see *KLÖM*, XIII, pp. 48–51; György Spira, *A pestiek Petőfi és Haynau között*, Budapest, 1998, pp. 334–37; Aladár Urbán, 'Bizottmány a haza védelmére, a rend és béke fenntartására', *Századok*, 136, 2002, pp. 741–87.

76 For the resolution of the House on 8 October, see Beér, *Népképviseleti*, p. 273. Kossuth's speech: *KLÖM*, XIII, pp. 121–26.

was disguised by declarations of loyalty. We should distinguish two periods. From March 1848 Kossuth was working to secure Hungary's financial independence. In that he could count on the support of the rest of the cabinet which was loyal to the Habsburg king. Every minister, including even Széchenyi, agreed that the country could not take on the obligation to pay annually a 10,000,000 forint share of the state debt. The government was also united in rejecting Croat separatism, in demanding an at least formally independent army (which Batthyány secured at the beginning of May) and also in inviting Ferdinand (who had to flee Vienna) to stay in Buda. The last aspiration tied in with the plan, which looked feasible between May and July, that Austria would participate in German unification. Should Austria become a part of a united Germany, only Hungary and its associated Lands could ensure the dynasty's independence. The prospect of German unification explains why the Batthyány ministry sent envoys to the Frankfurt parliament in May and took steps to enter into an alliance with Germany.

From the beginning of July Kossuth's policies diverged radically from those of the rest of the cabinet. Affected by the note sent on 29 July by the Austrian ministry that it could not stay neutral in the Hungarian-Croatian conflict, Kossuth's anti-Viennese stance became quite apparent in his journal, launched on 1 July, as well as in his speeches in the National Assembly. In addition to being a spokesman for the government, Kossuth, now and again, expounded what were very clearly his own views — as in the Address debate, for instance. After the arrival of the *Denkschrift* in Pest, Kossuth determined to resolve the crisis one way or another, and carried the assembly with him in the proposal to send a deputation to Ferdinand with the request that he declare his view on whether or not the king wanted to retain his throne (on Hungarian terms). Kossuth expected the Batthyány ministry to fall and, when this happened, he immediately pushed through the assembly the two bills, as laws, (both vital for the country's defence) which Ferdinand had not sanctioned. With that move Kossuth, enthusiastically supported by the National Assembly, broke away from the legal order of constitutional monarchy. Following the death of Lamberg, the Committee of National Defence on 28 September and, at Kossuth's initiative, provisionally took over executive power. On his return from his recruitment drive, Kossuth took over as head of the committee, now fully empowered as a government. By then it was obvious that military conflict with Austria was on the cards.

Alone among his former cabinet colleagues, Kossuth was determined to defend on the battlefield the country's new constitutional order based on the April Laws. The key to his radicalized attitudes can be found in his

speech in the House on 21 August. Why was he a member of the government — he asked — when under the pressure of circumstances its policy could not be as ‘uniform and energetic’ as he would wish. He himself was ‘not afraid of moving forward.’⁷⁷ This might have meant the hope, which he expressed in his letter to László Csány on 14 August, that the ministry would be ‘reorganized’.⁷⁸ Or he might have meant the formation of a new cabinet in which he would serve. Or it could have meant what actually happened: that he would be released from the ‘shackles of collective ministerial responsibility.’⁷⁹ But the rider in his speech on 21 August was that ‘I shall always be in the front line’.⁸⁰ Kossuth’s frequently employed rhetorical flourishes, especially that he was ‘not afraid of moving ahead’, paved the way from March 1848 to the Declaration of Independence in 1849.

77 *KLÖM*, XII, p. 772.

78 *Ibid.*, XII, p. 723.

79 Announcement in *Kossuth Hírlapja* on 14 September, *KLÖM*, XII, p. 940.

80 *Ibid.*, p. 772.

Kossuth, Parliamentary Dictator¹

Róbert Hermann

Returning to the Hungarian capital from his recruitment drive on the Great Hungarian Plain on 7 October 1848, Kossuth faced a situation that had changed radically. The causes of the change had both a political and a military dimension. On the political side there had been two significant developments. First, on 2 October Prime Minister Count Lajos Batthyány had finally handed in his resignation and had had it accepted by King Ferdinand V. Second, the monarch, who had been informed of the death on 28 September of Lieutenant-General Ferencz Lamberg (his appointee three days earlier as commander-in-chief of the armed forces in Hungary), exploited Batthyány's resignation to dissolve the National Assembly and to appoint the Ban of Croatia, Josip Jelačić, royal commissar plenipotentiary and commander-in-chief of the country's armed forces.² This marked the launch of the campaign against the Hungarian revolution. On 4/5 October Field-Marshal Count Theodor Baillet de Latour, minister for military affairs, bombarded the commanders-in-chief and the commanders of Hungary's fortresses, as well as those in command of forces stationed in the neighbouring provinces of the empire, with orders to take overt action against the Hungarian government. The appointment of Jelačić in itself amounted to a provocation and showed that of the various options mooted by Vienna, it was direct military intervention that had won the day.

1 For a comprehensive account of Kossuth's activities in 1848–49, see Istvan Deak, *The Lawful Revolution: Louis Kossuth and the Hungarians, 1848–1849*, New York, 1979 (hereafter *Lawful Revolution*). Revised and enlarged edition: Istvan Deak, *Die rechtmäßige Revolution. Lajos Kossuth und die Ungarn 1848–1849*, Wien-Köln-Graz, 1989.

2 *Correspondence Relative to the Affairs of Hungary 1847–49: presented to Both Houses of National Assembly by Command of Her Majesty, 15 August 1850*. London, 1851, (hereafter *Correspondence*), pp. 86–87, George Klapka, *Memoirs of the War of Independence in Hungary*, London, 1850. Vol. I. (hereafter *Memoirs I-II*) pp. 241–45.

The other dimension was the sphere of the military. On 29 September 1848, while Kossuth was on his second recruitment drive on the Great Hungarian Plain, the Transdanubian Hungarian army had clashed with the forces of Jelačić on the northern shores of Lake Velence, in the Pákozd-Sukoró area, and had in a defensive action succeeded in containing them. Jelačić was genuinely taken aback by the spirited resistance of the Hungarians (after all, it was a case of imperial royal troops firing at imperial royal troops, with both sides avowedly loyal to the monarch) and called a halt to the fighting, the two sides agreeing a three-day ceasefire. Experiencing problems with the provisioning of his troops, Jelačić did not see out the ceasefire and on 1 October took his men off in the direction of Győr. Cautiously, the Hungarian army pursued the Croatian forces, which were numerically still superior.

Latour wanted troops sent from Vienna to reinforce Jelačić, but one contingent refused to obey his commands on 6 October, the day a new revolt broke out in Vienna and claimed Latour himself as a victim. In the absence of any back-up, Jelačić promptly fled the country. The Transdanubian Hungarian army defeated one of Jelačić's flank divisions in two sweeps, at Tác, county Fejér, on 5 October and at Ozora, county Tolna, taking 9,000 enemy soldiers prisoner. By mid-October the whole of Transdanubia was again in Hungarian hands, as were the most important fortresses of the western part of the country: Komárom, Lipótvár (Leopoldov) and Eszék (Osijek). News of the royal decree of 3 October, coinciding with the very moment of Jelačić's escape, helped ensure that the majority of imperial officers were willing to continue their support of the Hungarians. The Viennese revolt could not have come at a better time: it paralysed for several weeks the nerve centre of the planned military counter-attack on the revolution.³

3 For the military manoeuvres, see Aladár Urbán, 'The Hungarian Valmy and Saratoga: the Battle of Pákozd, the Surrender of Ozora, and their Consequences in the Fall of 1848', in Béla K. Király (ed.), *East European Society and War in the Era of Revolution, 1775–1856. War and Society in East Central Europe*, Vol. IV, New York, 1984 (hereafter *Era of Revolution*), pp. 548–55; Róbert Hermann, 'Military Events in Transdanubia and Northern Hungary: September–November 1848', (hereafter *Military Events in Transdanubia*) in Gábor Bona (ed.), *The Hungarian Revolution and War of Independence, 1848–1849. A Military History. War and Society in East Central Europe*, Vol. XXXV, New York, 1999, (hereafter, *Military History*), pp. 245–57. For the officers' crisis of loyalty, see Istvan Deák, 'Where Loyalty and Where Rebellion' in Király, *Era of Revolution*, pp. 406–07.

Returning to the capital on 7 October, Kossuth made a major speech on the unlawful nature of the monarch's manifesto, as a result of which the Hungarian National Assembly proceeded to declare the manifesto unlawful. The dissolution of parliament was indeed unlawful, since Law IV of 1848 made it clear that dissolution was possible only after approval of the previous year's balance sheet and the following year's budget; also, Law III of 1848 specified that dissolution was conditional upon the countersignature of one of the Budapest-based ministers. In fact, the appointment of Baron Ádám Récsey in the decree of 3 October had been countersigned in Vienna — and by Récsey himself.⁴

News of the Viennese revolt reached Budapest only on the night of 7/8 October. Upon hearing the news, Kossuth tried to ensure that the Hungarian army pursuing Jelačić urgently give armed assistance to Vienna, which was surrounded by the forces of Jelačić and the local forces expelled from it. This was another issue that had to be settled in the wake of Batthyány's resignation, which had left the country without an executive. After Batthyány's departure the matter had been resolved by the Országos Honvédelmi Bizottmány (OHB, Committee of National Defence) which immediately took over the powers of the executive and it seemed sensible for this body to continue to fulfil the role of a provisional administration.

During the sitting of the House on 7 October Kossuth alluded only in passing to the necessity of making provision for the exercise of executive power. The main purpose of that sitting was to declare unlawful the October 3 royal decree dissolving the National Assembly, since it was this declaration that provided the legal basis for taking action on the future of the executive. News of the Viennese revolt of 6 October made it manifest that no forces would be available to enforce the October 3 decree, so on 8 October Kossuth proposed that the National Assembly invest the OHB with the powers of the executive by appointing three OHB members to exercise these powers, leaving the duties of the remaining members to be defined by this triumvirate. The National Assembly approved this proposal by acclamation and Kossuth was elected president of the OHB, proposed by István Zákó, member for county Bács.

⁴ *KLÖM*, XIII, pp. 107–19. Selections in German translation in Johann Janotyckh von Adlerstein *Chronologisches Tagebuch der magyarischen Revolution und zwar bis zur ersten Wiederbesetzung Pesth-Ofens durch die k. k. Truppen*, Wien, 1851, Vol. III, pp. 269–72, (hereafter, *Chronologisches Tagebuch III*). The decree is printed in *Correspondence*, pp. 213–16.

The issue now was: who would form the triumvirate? The speaker, Dénes Pázmány jr., proposed that the House should let Kossuth select the membership of the OHB. Kossuth proposed that Pál Nyáry should be in the triumvirate, Nyáry proposed Pázmány, while László Madarász proposed the former minister of the interior Bertalan Szemere, despite their well-known political differences.

Pázmány declared that, as speaker, he would not deem it right to unite both legislative and executive power in his own person (though it should be said that during Kossuth's absences he was one of the most active members of the OHB), and suggested that Nyáry and Baron Zsigmond Perényi should be members of the triumvirate. Nyáry proposed that the OHB retain its existing structure and that all that was necessary was to elect Kossuth its president. Pázmány reiterated his previous proposal, which was less specific than Kossuth's but increased the legal powers of the office of OHB president to almost the same extent. It was now up to Kossuth to allocate the various ministerial responsibilities among the members of the OHB. He appreciated that Nyáry, whose name had been mentioned as a possible member, was not keen on the idea of a triumvirate and that the National Assembly might have difficulty choosing between the names put forward. Kossuth therefore accepted the framework proposed by Pázmány and was thus elected president of a government in which responsibilities were not allocated to individual ministers. He was now leader of the country.⁵

This possibility had first arisen on 11/12 September but at that time there was no lawful way for Kossuth to become prime minister, since he could not have counted on the approval of the palatine or, especially, of the king. By 8 October it was no longer possible to operate within the framework of the April Laws, for the monarch's decree of 3 October had made it clear that through the imposition of the military dictatorship of Jelačić he intended either to return to the situation prior to spring 1848 or to rule in some other, unconstitutional manner. There were thus three options available to the Hungarian National Assembly:

- 1) accept the decree and dissolve itself,
- 2) opt for revolution, or
- 3) remain within the law by resisting unlawful acts and continuing to regard the April Laws as the legal basis for its activities, while at

⁵ The minutes of the session are given in *KLÖM*, XIII, pp. 121–26. Selections in German translation in Adlerstein, *Chronologisches Tagebuch*, III, pp. 273–75.

the same time not insisting on the letter of the law but adapting it to the needs of national self-defence.

Kossuth was temperamentally suited to taking the lead if either the second or the third option were chosen, but his training in civil law as well as his flexible political nous, which regarded laws as frameworks to be exploited rather than texts set in stone, meant that his preference was for the third option. But it remained to be seen whether a politician who had been unable to be a team player either in opposition or as a member of the Batthyány government, and who went his own way whenever he could, would be able to appreciate that he was the head of a new provisional government — but not its master.

For by this time Kossuth had virtually no-one to challenge him. After 2 October 1848 there was no politician anywhere in Hungary who had any hope of opposing him, whether in opting for a third solution or a solution of any other kind. Széchenyi had completed his first month in the asylum at Döbling, József Eötvös had left the country at the end of September, and Batthyány had resigned from the National Assembly. Ferencz Deák was troubled by so many doubts about Hungary's hopes of successful resistance that he would not have adopted a half-revolutionary, half-lawful, self-defence policy even if his temperament had made this possible. Gábor Klauzál had also withdrawn from public life. Of the possible members of the OHB Bertalan Szemere could not muster enough support either within or without the National Assembly to mount a challenge to Kossuth. László Madarász had the support of only a small group of radicals in the National Assembly. The centre in the National Assembly had not yet forgiven Pál Nyáry for his role in the Batthyány government. The others — Imre Sembery, József Patay, János Pálffy, Baron Zsigmond Perényi, Baron Miklós Jósika, and Dénes Pázmány sr. — were fairly colourless figures in public life who would not have dreamt of mounting a challenge to Kossuth. The former minister of defence, Lázár Mészáros, was a newcomer to politics.

The new government insisted on the fiction of legality: for example, in appointing officers and generals it expressed 'the hope that His Majesty will subsequently approve' the disposition. This made it possible to fill the many vacancies that had arisen through the reorganization of the army and at the same time signalled the readiness of the Hungarians to reach a compromise with officers unable to decide whether to act on their oath to the monarch or on the one they had taken to the Hungarian constitution.

Hearing of a possible offer of French and British mediation, Kossuth encamped on 18 October and at the end of his third recruitment drive

reached the camp at the Leitha with some 10,000 men, mainly militia and *honvéd* battalions. The main Hungarian army halted at the Leitha and was slow, for both military and political reasons, to come to the aid of the imperial capital, now in turmoil. Twice it crossed the Leitha, returning to its right bank both times. The imperial forces encamped under the city walls were already superior in numbers even before the arrival of general Windisch-Grätz's main army, and Kossuth needed all his powers of oratory to persuade the army command to cross the Leitha for a third time. In advance of this he sent a peace delegation to Windisch-Grätz. The latter rejected talks and on 30 October resoundingly rebuffed the Hungarian attack at Schwechat. The only positive outcome of the defeat was that Kossuth was at last able to appoint as commander of the Upper Danube army Artúr Görgei, whom he had had in mind for the post for some time.⁶ Kossuth remained in camp for some ten days after the defeat at Schwechat and, despite having placed Görgei in command, continued himself to deal personally with matters at the highest level. That relations between them were good or at least cordial at this time is shown by the letter Görgei wrote to the OHB not long after Kossuth's departure, in which (though not mentioning Kossuth by name) he clearly suggests that it would be desirable to grant Kossuth dictatorial powers.⁷

On his return to Pest Kossuth had daily to take decisions on dozens of matters relating to the deployment and replacement of troops, for the military developments in other theatres of war were by no means favourable. The Serbian uprising in September had not been stemmed, and Arad and Temesvár (Timișoara), the two most significant fortress towns in the Banat, were refusing to bow to the Hungarian authorities. Here, however, the locally-stationed Hungarian forces soon proved a match: by the end of the year the Serbian rebels were substantially contained and Arad, too, was under siege, albeit not in a vice-like grip. Towards the end of September Transylvania witnessed a Romanian uprising which initially had the support of the two Romanian border guard divisions and later of Baron Antal Puchner, the imperial commander-in-chief. By the end of November the Hungarian troops had been forced back to the north-

6 For the manoeuvres, see Arthur Görgei, *My Life and Acts in Hungary in the Years 1848 and 1849*, New York, 1852, pp. 56–78, (hereafter Görgei, *My Life and Acts*); Wolfgang Häusler, *Das Gefecht bei Schwechat am 30 Oktober 1848*, Militärhistorische Schriftenreihe, Heft 34, Wien, 1977; Hermann *Military Events in Transdanubia*, pp. 262–66.

7 Extracts from Görgei's letter in Görgei, *My Life and Acts*, pp. 88–89.

western borders of Transylvania. The situation changed in mid-December when command of the north Transylvanian troops passed to the Polish general Józef Bem. Bem launched an attack and by Christmas his troops were in Kolozsvár (Cluj), while the New Year saw the whole of northern Transylvania in Hungarian hands.

Kossuth and the OHB continued to deploy the military organization originally formulated by Bathyány. They dispatched commissars to the local authorities to deal with recruitment and supplies, putting the economy at the service of the military. The OHB operated as a collegiate government: responsibilities were not permanently assigned to individuals. Though the OHB had been substantially enlarged since it was first established, the majority of its members did not play an active role in it. The most frequent signature on its documents is that of Kossuth, while those of Pál Nyáry, Bertalan Szemere, Miklós Jósika, and László Madarász are also relatively common; but those of Imre Sembery, Zsigmond Perényi, or Mihály Esterházy are much less frequently found.⁸

Though the work of the OHB proceeded smoothly on the whole, certain administrative problems surfaced particularly when Kossuth was away. For example, reports from the southern territories and from Transylvania had immediately to be acted upon and no-one could say whether the instructions issued were likely to tally with the views of Kossuth, then encamped by the Leitha. A reorganization of the OHB was also indicated after Schwechat, when it became clear that in the short term a peaceful solution — that is, the formation of a government having the approval of the king — was unlikely to be secured. The most obvious change needed was the allocation of the various portfolios among members of the OHB and perhaps others who joined the government. A more technical matter was that some members of the OHB were, because of the collegial nature of the government, regularly absent from the National Assembly.

Talks on the transformation of the OHB into a government proper, by the allocation of portfolios, began on 19 November. Kossuth was ill at this time and therefore communicated with Szemere, the de facto no. 2, in writing. On the very first day, Szemere pointed to the dearth of suitable

8 The OHB papers are in the Hungarian National Archives, H2. (Magyar Országos Levéltár. Miniszterelnökség, Országos Honvédelmi Bizottmány és Kormányzóelnökség iratai.) Most of the printed materials relating to the September–December 1848 period are printed in *KLÖM*, XIII. Substantial documentation in German may be found in Johann Janotyckh von Adlerstein, *Archiv des ungarischen Ministeriums des Inneren und des Landesverteidigungsausschusses*, Altenburg, 1851, Vol. III (hereafter *Archiv*).

candidates and noted the importance of ensuring that all recognized religions be represented proportionately, and that aristocrats should be represented as well as Transylvanians. In his view the most important issue to be addressed was ‘whether negotiations with the dynasty were in prospect, or completely out of the question’. The issue, he continued, of the allocation of the portfolios was a technical matter but one with far-reaching political consequences. Though he put forward some names himself, he made no suggestions as to who should have which portfolio. From Kossuth’s brief reply it is clear that he wished to retain for himself oversight of finance and army affairs, and indeed of ‘general policy’. He planned to offer to Nyáry the portfolio of army procurement, to Szemere that of justice, to Madarász internal affairs, to Perényi trade, to László Teleki foreign affairs and to government commissar Sebő Vukovics the transport portfolio. For minister of cultural affairs he had two nominees, Bishop Mihály Horváth of Csanád and Főispán Károly Szent-Iványi. He thought four regional captains of the national guard deserving of government office: Count Kázmér Batthyány, a főispán and government commissar, Főispán Gedeon Ráday, Ödön Beöthy, also a főispán and government commissar, and Count György Károlyi.

To Szemere it seemed that since there was ‘never any difference of opinion’ between Kossuth and Madarász, Kossuth’s proposals amounted to a de facto concentration of all power in his hands. Szemere therefore proposed that the ministry of finance be offered to Pulszky, and the ministry of internal affairs to Nyáry rather than to Madarász. He also drew attention to Pázmány. Kossuth replied that Nyáry would not accept internal affairs, and Pázmány would not accept either post. In his revised proposal he wanted to keep Lázár Mészáros at defence, Perényi (rather than Teleki) at external affairs, Beöthy (rather than Vukovics) at transport, Pulszky at trade, and, at cultural affairs, Domokos Teleki alongside Mihály Horváth.

Szemere contacted Nyáry about internal affairs, adding in his note to Kossuth that if in the new government he ‘let someone else have (sc. that post) ... I would be underwriting my own incompetence.’ (NB Szemere had been the minister for internal affairs in the Batthyány government.) He was prepared to do this for Nyáry or Pázmány, but not for Madarász. In other respects he agreed with Kossuth’s proposal and would have allowed the police affairs portfolio to go to Madarász, who could not, however, be allowed to have either internal affairs or justice. Kossuth insisted on Madarász for internal affairs and, to divert attention from this, proposed new names for the transport and defence portfolios. Szemere responded by proposing new permutations involving (with the exception of Gábor Lónyay) names that had already been put forward in Kossuth’s

various proposals. By 26 November Kossuth had a new proposal. In this Madarász figured only as being in charge of police and postal affairs.⁹ A fly in the ointment was Nyáry, who refused all offers of a portfolio even though Szemere begged him to 'talk to Kossuth. Don't let your antipathy — worthy though it may be — get the better of you.'¹⁰

These discussions ended in a compromise. Kossuth did not form a government: he allocated portfolios within the OHB, but those in charge of the portfolios were not — with the exception of Mészáros — called 'minister'. Kossuth himself continued as president of the OHB and in charge of financial affairs and of 'the political direction of military affairs'. Nyáry was in charge of internal affairs (civil administration) and military supplies. Szemere was in charge of justice, Pulcszky of trade, Madarász of police and postal affairs, while Mészáros remained in overall charge of army affairs, though he kept resigning from time to time.¹¹ Kossuth offered transport to Beöthy, who however even two weeks later had not responded; nor did Beöthy accept either the religion and education portfolio, or the external affairs post.¹² The reason there were no *de facto* ministries in the government was probably that Nyáry did not want to be a minister, while Kossuth wanted a government in which all the ministerial posts were filled by his appointees.

The new OHB regime lasted only until the end of the month, however. From 13 December Szemere was national commissar plenipotentiary of Upper Hungary and from 19 December Beöthy held the same post in Transylvania, while Pulcszky left Hungary without notice. From the time of the move to Debrecen, the ministries were, in practice, once more headed by the secretaries of state. Only the posts of Kossuth and Madarász proved to be enduring. In this system of government, partly because of the others' passivity, leadership was exercised by Kossuth alone, with only a limited amount of influence from others.

The enforced resignation on 2 December 1848 of Ferdinand V had important implications for the legal basis of a war such as this, waged by Hungary in self-defence. As it was Ferdinand who had sanctioned the April Laws, it was the existence of his person on the throne that had prevented open aggression against Hungary. On 2 December his place on

⁹ This exchange of correspondence is in *KLÖM*, XIII, pp. 503–11. See also Deak, *Lawful Revolution*, pp. 204–05.

¹⁰ *KLÖM*, XIII, pp. 510–11.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 572–73.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 593–94.

the throne was taken by Franz Joseph I. At Kossuth's instigation, the Hungarian National Assembly argued, with incontrovertible logic, that it did not recognize the change of ruler: the Hungarian throne could be occupied only by a ruler chosen by the Hungarian parliament and one, moreover, who had taken an oath upon the laws of Hungary.¹³

The imperial forces launched their attack in the first half of December. Lieutenant-General Schlik invaded Upper Hungary and inflicted a number of defeats on hastily-assembled Hungarian troops, and advanced to the Tisza. In mid-December the main forces under Windisch-Grätz swept away the Upper Danube forces of Artúr Görgei. On 30 December at Kossuth's request Major-General Mór Perczel's troops fought a battle at Mór and suffered a serious defeat.¹⁴

Following this defeat, at its session on 31 December 1848 Kossuth proposed, and the OHB accepted, that the National Assembly remove to Debrecen. This session also saw the famous duel between Kossuth and the former prime minister, Lajos Batthyány. The latter had returned to Pest earlier in the month with the aim of trying to counter-balance the influence of Kossuth. He played no role in the proceedings, however, until the sessions on 30/31 December, when he failed in his efforts to keep the National Assembly in Budapest while allowing only the OHB to move its base to Debrecen. He proposed that a peace mission be sent to Windischgrätz, but the prince's reply 'Unbedingte Unterwerfung' (unconditional surrender) hardly augured well, nor did the fact that one member of the delegation, Batthyány, was detained after the imperial royal forces entered the capital. Batthyány was thus unable to follow the National Assembly to Debrecen. Though Ferencz Deák was also a member of the mission, he was not detained, but he would have been allowed to continue to Debrecen only on condition he tried to persuade Kossuth and his circle to surrender. This Deák was not prepared to do.¹⁵

13 Adlerstein, *Archiv*, III, pp. 451–54.

14 For the military manoeuvres, see Gábor Bona, 'Winter Campaign', in Bona, *Military History*, pp. 288–94.

15 Aladár Urbán, 'Batthyány Lajos a népképviseleti országgyűlésen 1848. decemberében', *Századok*, 1991, pp. 217–24. Minutes of the session are in KLÖM, XIII, pp. 940–52. See also Daniel Irányi-Charles-Louis Chassin, *Histoire politique de la révolution de Hongrie 1847–1849*, II, Paris, 1860 (hereafter Irányi-Chassin *Révolution II*), pp. 203–205; Béla K. Király, *Ferenc Deák*, Boston, 1972, pp. 136–37; Deak, *Lawful Revolution* pp. 213–14.

Even before the fall of the capital Kossuth had declared that 'as long as we have an army, we have a homeland'.¹⁶ Though genuinely unhappy about the loss of the capital, Kossuth did not despair over it. His main aim was to raise as large an army as possible, and as soon as possible, beyond the river Tisza and with a vigorous counter-attack restore the independence of the country, won in April of the previous year. Nor did he harbour any illusions about the peace mission to Windischgrätz. When the delegation's report was received he argued in the closed sitting of the National Assembly on 12 January and the open session of 13 January that it appeared to be the case that the other side intended to bring the war to an end by totally subjugating Hungary, and this offered little scope for further negotiation. Kossuth could imagine, as a possibility, that if the war should end in victory, Hungary could even constitutionally move beyond the achievements of April 1848.¹⁷ This did not go unnoticed by the nascent but as yet still leaderless opposition within the National Assembly, the so-called 'peace party'. However, in another debate, on 12 February 1849, Kossuth was still declaring that in his government's view no avenue should be left unexplored in the search for a peaceful conclusion to the war.¹⁸

Following the attack and seizure of the capital, significant changes were made in the OHB. From mid-December Szemere became national commissar plenipotentiary of Upper Hungary. After the fall of the capital Sembery made no further appearances in Debrecen, while the speaker, Dénes Pázmány jr., who had played such an active role in the OHB in October 1848, remained in Kecskemét and subsequently returned to Pest. Nor did Dénes Pázmány sr. resume his seat in the upper house. Ferencz Pulszky, who had been co-opted on to the OHB in November rather than being elected by the National Assembly, went abroad for reasons that

16 Kossuth's letters to Görgei, 29 and 30 December 1848, in *KLÖM*, XIII, pp. 916–17, 923–24.

17 For the closed session of 12 January, see Pál Hunfalvy, *Napló 1848–1849*, ed. Aladár Urbán, Budapest, 1986 (hereafter, *Napló*), pp. 149–52; Gusztáv Beksics, *Kemény Zsigmond. A forradalom s a kiegyezés*, Budapest, 1883 (hereafter *Kemény*), pp. 68–70. For the open session of 13 January, see *KLÖM*, XIV, pp. 109–20. Extracts from the minutes of these sessions in Dénes Pap, *A parlament Debrecenben 1849*, Leipzig, 1870, Vol. I (hereafter *Parlament I*), pp. 11–34. See also Irányi-Chassin, *Révolution II*, pp. 242–44.

18 *KLÖM*, XIV, pp. 405–409. Extracts from the minutes of the session in Pap, *Parlament I*, pp. 118–133. See also Irányi-Chassin, *Revolution II*, p. 238; Beksics, *Kemény*, pp. 82–83. See also Domokos Kosáry, *The Press during the Hungarian Revolution of 1848–1849*, East European Monographs No. CXCVIII, New York, 1986 (hereafter *Hungarian Press*), pp. 300–02.

remain unclear. János Pálffy resigned while still in Debrecen. During Kossuth's recruitment forays between February and April 1849, the day-to-day work of the OHB remained largely in the hands of Pál Nyáry and Miklós Jósika. László Madarász was at the helm of the National Police Office, which under his directorate burgeoned into a virtual ministry. In addition, Count Mihály Esterházy was active in securing army equipment and provisions. Kossuth's role in the OHB was thus greater than ever before.

Indeed, this was the reason for his relatively rare appearances in the National Assembly. Here the left and the 'peace party' were about evenly balanced, so in debate much depended on which side could secure the support of the centre. The National Assembly proposed severe penalties for officers who had acted in a cowardly way, for traitors, and for absenteeism by members, but these were rarely applied with the full force of the law. In the open sessions between 13 January and 14 April 1849, Kossuth spoke altogether only seven times.¹⁹ He also took no part in the debates on the assizes or on the accreditation of absentee members. His speeches focused chiefly on the military situation and the political consequences of the war. Though a convinced National Assembly supporter, Kossuth realized that the fate of the country would be decided on the battlefield rather than in the National Assembly, and therefore he almost certainly regarded the maintaining of contact with his army generals in the field more important than parliamentary speech-making.

Having taken Budapest, Windischgrätz thought he had won the war. The imperial royal forces continued their triumphal march. At the same time, the Hungarians' council of war, held before the evacuation of the capital on 2 January 1849, decided to concentrate on the Hungarian forces beyond the Tisza. The plan was to surrender the southern territories while the Upper Tisza battalions as well as Perczel's troops made a stand along the Tisza. To ensure the success of this concentrated effort, Görgei's Upper Danube forces had to create a diversion towards the north-west to relieve besieged Lipótvár and then retreat in the direction of the Upper Tisza via the mining towns. The plan was successful, not least because it prevented Windischgrätz from taking any action for several weeks after taking the capital. On 21–22 January Colonel György Klapka's forces along the River Bodrog stopped the Schlik Corps from the north, while on

¹⁹ On 9 and 13 January, 12 February, 1, 9, and 25 March, and 14 April. *KLÖM*, XIV, pp. 61–67, 109–18, 405–09, 559–62, 718–25, 873–87. He spoke in closed session at least as frequently.

22–25 January Perczel defeated an imperial mounted division at Szolnok and Cegléd. At the beginning of February, Görgei reached the Eperjes and Kassa region (Prešov and Košice). János Damjanich, commander of a battalion summoned from the Southern territories, sent a division of reinforcements to Bem from Arad. With this support Bem was able to stop Puchner's forces at Piski. From there, with amazing speed, he reached northern Transylvania and expelled the enemy forces that had retaken it. Then, sweeping south, with a brilliant manoeuvre behind Puchner's back, he captured Nagyszeben (Sibiu) from the Russian troops that had been supporting the imperial forces since early February. By the end of March he had, with the exception of the fortress of Gyulafehérvár (Alba Iulia) and the Erzgebirge, cleared virtually the whole of Transylvania of Austrian and Russian forces. In mid-February the Hungarian troops summoned from the Southern territories also reached the Cibakháza-Szolnok region.²⁰

Time had now come for the counter-attack, but this was delayed. Kossuth had at first wanted to make Bem commander-in-chief of the united army, but Bem refused because of the situation in Transylvania. On the other hand, Kossuth was disinclined to propose Görgei because of his retreat from Transdanubia and his 5 January statement in Vác, which was intended to reassure his monarchist officers but which could have been (and indeed was) misunderstood.²¹

Thus the Polish general newly arrived from France, Henryk Dembinski, could not have come at a better time. Kossuth put him in command of the four Hungarian armies forming the main army. Dembinski proved to be a disaster, however. From the outset his actions defied common sense: he allowed Schlik's already isolated band to escape and fragmented the forces at his disposal. Thus, when at the end of February Windischgrätz finally awoke from his winter torpor and, setting off for Debrecen, fought a battle at Kápolna on 26/27 February, it was against only some 50 per cent of the main Hungarian army, and this was roundly defeated. As he retreated Dembinski gave further evidence of his unsuitability as military leader

20 For the military manoeuvres, see Gábor Bona 'Winter Campaign' in Bona, *Military History*, pp. 294–315, 332–36.

21 Görgei, *My Life and Acts*, pp. 128–31; Klapka, *Memoirs* I, pp. 167–75. See also Deák, *Lawful Revolution*, pp. 233–35; Bona, 'Winter Campaign', in Bona, *Military History*, pp. 301–03.

and his unhappy officers, with the active intervention of Bertalan Szemere, removed him from office.²²

Seeing the mood of the officers, Kossuth approved the decision on 5 March. Szemere and subsequently Kossuth put Görgei in temporary charge but, once in Debrecen, Kossuth took the post away from Görgei and on 8 March made Lieutenant-General Antal Vetter chief of the Hungarian forces.²³ Kossuth spent the next several weeks in camp and was thus there when the new leader launched an offensive in the Nagykörös area. This ended in a withdrawal for reasons of faulty reconnaissance.

After the battle of Kápolna, Windischgrätz sent an over-optimistic report to the imperial court, then residing in Olmütz. This report misled the court into thinking that the time had come for a showdown between absolutism and constitutionality. On 4 March the ruler dismissed the Reichstag, which was meeting in Kremsier (Kroměříž), and himself promulgated a constitution for his peoples. This constitution abolished the distinctions between territories and also split Hungary into several parts. Though this constitution was never implemented in Hungary (its introduction was first postponed until the end of the war, while at the end of the war it was postponed *sine die*), it led to similarly flawed responses from the other side.²⁴

News of the events in Olmütz reached Kossuth in the middle of March. He felt it imperative to respond as quickly as possible to this assertion by the imperial court that Hungary's laws and constitution did not exist. Two conditions needed to be fulfilled, however, before a riposte could be made. First, the Hungarian main army needed to strike a blow against the

22 Görgei, *My Life and Acts*, pp. 173–230; Geroge Klapka, *Der Nationalkrieg in Ungarn und Siebenbürgen in den Jahren 1848 und 1849*, Leipzig, 1851, Vol. I (hereafter *Nationalkrieg* I), pp. 228–76; Johann Prágay, *The Hungarian Revolution. Outlines of the Prominent Circumstances Attending the Hungarian Struggle for Freedom Together with Brief Biographical Sketches of the Leading Statesmen and Generals who Took Part in it*, New York and London, 1850 (hereafter *Hungarian Revolution*), pp. 27–36; Bartholomäus Szemere, *Graf Ludwig Batthyány, Arthur Görgei, Ludwig Kossuth. Politische Characterskizzen aus dem ungarischen Freiheitskriege*, Hamburg, 1853 (hereafter *Characterskizzen*, I–III), Vol. I pp. 42–48; Deak, *Lawful Revolution*, 238–40, 252–54; Bona, 'Winter Campaign', in Bona, *Military History*, pp. 315–22. For the imperial report on the battle of Kápolna, see *Correspondence*, pp. 149–50.

23 *KLÖM*, XIV, pp. 591–92, 601–03; Klapka, *Nationalkrieg*, I, pp. 287–92.

24 *Correspondence*, pp. 152–60. For other decrees concerning this constitution, see *ibid.*, pp. 160–62. See also Deak, *Lawful Revolution*, pp. 249–52; Csorba, *Revolution*, pp. 15–16.

Austrian forces, otherwise no counterblast could have any impact on foreign policy vis-à-vis Hungary's future. The second precondition was that the response had to be in the name of the National Assembly, that is, it should come from parliament and with its authority.

Returning to Debrecen, Kossuth therefore contacted Dániel Irányi, one of the leaders of the left in the National Assembly. They agreed that at the next session Irányi would propose that 'the president of the OHB should be authorized to remove the National Assembly from Debrecen to another location'. Kossuth hoped that the soon-to-be-launched counter-attack would soon liberate the capital and that the counterblast of the Hungarian National Assembly could then be issued from there.²⁵

At the same time Kossuth rebuffed offers from the other radical group, László Madarász and his colleagues. The Madarász group asked the president of the OHB to accept three of their proposals to counter an upsurge of activity by the peace party. These were: to bring Görgei before a military tribunal, to suspend the sittings of the National Assembly until the end of hostilities, and that Kossuth himself assume executive powers as well as the right to form a government and to reconvene the National Assembly. The political intent of the proposals was, unambiguously, to stem the continuing losses of the Madarász-led radicals by the only means that seemed possible: giving Kossuth dictatorial powers.²⁶

In a lengthy speech to the National Assembly on 25 March Kossuth pointed out to members that on his return from camp he wanted to find the same National Assembly in Debrecen that he was now addressing. This took some members aback, while others complained that the representative of executive power had dared pass judgment on the legislature from which his powers derived. When, however, Irányi put forward their agreed proposal, representative Zsigmond Ivánka, who was close to the peace party, demanded a statement from Kossuth on the matter, whereupon Kossuth declared himself satisfied with the assembly's promise 'not to allow the House to dwindle to a rump'.²⁷

Nor did Kossuth consider it important to back László Madarász, who represented his policies in the National Assembly. The peace party, led by Gábor Kazinczy and Lajos Kovács, regarded this as a considerable political coup. Skilfully exploiting Kossuth's absences and his indifference on

25 Irányi-Chassin, *Révolution*, II, p. 350

26 József Madarász, *Emlékirataim 1831–1881*, Budapest, 1883, pp. 221–25. See also Kosáry, *Hungarian Press*, pp. 318–19.

27 *KLÖM*, XIV, pp. 718–26. See also Hunfalvy, *Napló*, pp. 231–38; Irányi-Chassin, *Révolution*, II, pp. 348–51; Beksics, *Kemény*, pp. 114–19.

his return, they used a press campaign and a National Assembly inquiry into the ‘affair of the diamonds’ to bring down the leader of the radicals, the widely-disliked László Madarász. Madarász had confiscated the assets of Ödön Zichy (who had been executed on Görgei’s orders on 30 September 1848), some of which — including 19 gold buttons inlaid with diamonds — were found to be missing when a part of these were melted down on the orders of the OHB in March 1849. However, they all turned up once an inventory was made. Since Madarász had had charge of the hoard, it was logical to assume that it was he who had removed and subsequently replaced the diamonds.²⁸

At the end of March came news of the liberation of Transylvania. The southern campaign of Mór Perczel also met with success, bringing the Bácska and the Banat under Hungarian rule. The military ball was now in the Hungarians’ court and when Görgei replaced Vetter he exploited this advantage. At the beginning of April the Hungarian army lined up for an attack in the Eger-Gyöngyös region. Though the forces of Windischgrätz were superior in numbers, the Hungarian plan of campaign devised in Eger allowed for this, and in the first phase of the campaign the Hungarians came out on top in every encounter.²⁹ Throughout this first phase of the campaign Kossuth remained with the troops and sent stirring accounts of the triumphant progress of Görgei’s army to his regional commanders and to the OHB. At Gödöllő, on 7 April, following the victory at Isaszeg the previous day, he told Görgei and his generals what he planned to say in response to the Olmütz declaration. As he encountered little dissent he was able to return to Debrecen secure in the knowledge that his officers were behind him on this issue.³⁰

Back in Debrecen Kossuth convened a closed session of the National Assembly for 13 April, where he proposed that Hungary declare itself independent and remove the Habsburgs from the Hungarian throne. Contemporary accounts of the outcome of the debate differ widely. It seems Kossuth did not manage to convince every member of the

28 Róbert Hermann, *A rendőrminiszter és a Zichy-gyémántok*, Székesfehérvár, 1994. See also Deák, *Lawful Revolution*, pp. 221–22, 258, 282; Kosáry, *Hungarian Press*, pp. 323–24, 329–30.

29 For the campaign, see Görgei, *My Life and Acts*, pp. 247–73; Klapka *Nationalkrieg*, I, pp. 303–327; Prágay, *Hungarian Revolution*, pp. 39–43; Gábor Bona, ‘The Spring Campaign’, in Bona, *Military History*, pp. 336–350.

30 Görgei, *My Life and Acts*, pp. 274–79. Klapka, *Nationalkrieg*, p. 327; Deák, *Lawful Revolution*, p. 259.

desirability of taking these steps.³¹ The next day, 14 April, at a session that resembled more a public meeting than a session of the National Assembly, Kossuth put forward his proposal that Hungary declare itself independent and that the House of Habsburg-Lorraine be removed from its throne. The meeting was held not in the oratory of the Calvinist College but in the Great Church, which was packed to the rafters, and the presence of the crowds discouraged those who might have been inclined to oppose the proposal. Kossuth's proposal was accepted by acclaim and without being put to the vote. The meeting also made him Governor-president, that is, provisional head of state. The declaration of independence which enshrined these decisions was largely the work of Kossuth himself, and was accepted by the National Assembly on 19 April.³²

Kossuth's aim was twofold. First, he wanted to disarm the peace party, which was gaining ground in the National Assembly. Secondly, he was counting on intervention by the Western powers on Hungary's side, or at least their recognition of Hungary's independence. His plans were not realized, however. The peace party was not especially powerful and certainly could not have put up against him a candidate who could have turned around the nation's political stance and pushed it into some unprincipled agreement with the Habsburgs (something the peace party did not want in any case). And the Western great powers regarded Austria as vital to the European balance of power and had no intention of upsetting this for the sake of Hungary.

It seemed that this somewhat precipitate step was justified by military successes. In the second phase of the spring campaign, a further three defeats were inflicted on the enemy and the fortress of Komárom, under siege since January, was also relieved. Feldzeugmeister Welden, Windischgrätz's successor, was obliged to evacuate the capital, leaving only an outpost in Buda Castle. The crowning glory of the campaign was Görgei's capture of Buda on 21 May 1849, after a siege lasting 17 days.³³

31 Hunfalvy, *Napló*, pp. 243–50; Beksics, *Kemény*, pp. 123–27; János Varga, *Középszinten a történelemben. Frídeczky Lajos memoárja*, Salgótarján, 1988, pp. 46–47.

32 *KLÖM*, XIV, pp. 873–87, 894–912. Extracts from the declaration of independence are reprinted in *Correspondence*, pp. 256–64. See also *ibid.* pp. 191–92; Klapka, *Memoirs*, II, pp. 287–316. See also Deak, *Lawful Revolution*, pp. 260–64; Csorba, *Revolution*, pp. 17–18.

33 For the military operations, see Görgei, *My Life and Acts*, pp. 279–348; Klapka, *Nationalkrieg*, I, pp. 328–88; Prágay, *Hungarian Revolution*, pp. 46–61; Deak, *Lawful Revolution*, pp. 265–74; Bona, *Spring Campaign*, pp. 350–62. One of the imperial royal military dispatches is printed in *Correspondence*, pp. 186–87.

In the weeks following the Declaration of Independence, Kossuth was his usual bustling self. On 19 April he published an order regulating some of the issues that remained unclear following the liberation of the serfs, establishing the general principle that in cases of doubt the onus was not on the serf but on the ex-landlord to prove that any land in peasant hands had been merely leased to the serf.³⁴ Presented on 22 April and approved two days later, his proposal to increase the standing army by 50,000 was intended to secure the defence of the newly independent state.³⁵ He sought to restore the territorial integrity of the state by reincorporating the Csajkás district part of the Military Border into county Bács. This passed into law on 8 May.³⁶

Following the proclamation of independence Kossuth set to work on the formation of a new government. Initially, he considered a presidential system on the American model, in which he would himself as Governor-president exercise the powers of both prime minister and head of state. To use a recent example: he wanted to be both Lajos Batthyány and the Palatine István. Bertalan Szemere, to whom he had offered the post of minister of internal affairs, was minded otherwise. He took the classic view on the division of powers and wanted the posts of prime minister and head of state to be separate and distinct, and insisted that Kossuth name a prime minister as well. Szemere's views had force and received powerful support in the National Assembly. When he said he was prepared to withdraw from the government, Kossuth agreed to a separate post of 'president of the ministerial council', which Szemere felt able to interpret as 'prime minister'.³⁷ The government consisted of second-tier representatives of the reform opposition, with two exceptions: finance minister Ferencz Duschek and minister of defence Artúr Görgei (replaced by Lajos Aulich on 14 July 1849). It is worth noting that four of the ministers (prime minister and minister of internal affairs Szemere, transport and public works minister László Csány, justice minister Sebő Vukovich, and foreign affairs minister Kázmér Batthyány) had previously been

34 *KLÖM*, XV, pp. 43–46. See also Deak, *Lawful Revolution*, pp. 281–82.

35 *KLÖM*, XV, pp. 80–81. See also Deak, *Lawful Revolution*, p. 281.

36 *KLÖM*, XV, pp. 81–82.

37 For the formation of the government see the correspondence between Kossuth and Szemere in *KLÖM*, XV, pp. 15–17, 27, 65–68, 87, 116–17, 167, 174; Bertalan Szemere, *Politikai jellemrajzok Okmánytár*, Ed. Róbert Hermann, István Pelyach, Budapest, 1990 (hereafter *Jellemrajzok*), pp. 468–69, 471–74. See also Deak, *Lawful Revolution*, pp. 274–80; Tamás Katona (ed.), *Vukovich Sebő visszaemlékezései 1849-re*, Budapest, 1982 (hereafter *Vukovich Sebő*), pp. 67–69, 87–91; *Correspondence*, pp. 198–99.

national commissars. The portfolio of agriculture, industry and trade was for the time being held by Kázmér Batthyány. The difference of views between the Governor-president and the prime minister developed into a source of constant debate and friction on matters of public law. For Szemere, an improperly issued gubernatorial order was a just as substantial an issue to contest as Kossuth's use of the palatine's box at the National Theatre.³⁸

On 2 May 1849, the National Assembly heard Kossuth's statement that by the power invested in him he announced the new government. The document stated that a gubernatorial decree would be valid only with the countersignature of a minister. Apart from the right to nominate to posts in the upper echelons of the secular, spiritual and military hierarchy, the power of the governor was limited to the definition of the policies governing the state and the 'establishment of administrative and regulatory decrees'. In such matters, the ministers (the government) could not act without the approval of the governor. The right to remove and appoint ministers belonged to the governor. Declaration of war, suing for peace and the making of alliances might be carried out only with the approval of the National Assembly. The minister *a latere* that Law III of 1848 appointed to assist the king would be replaced by the minister for foreign affairs. The approval of army appointments would however remain within the remit of this ministry. The right to commute death sentences would henceforth be exercised by a panel of four nominated by the Governor-president.³⁹

In the spring of 1849 it seemed that in tandem with the military successes there was an opportunity to make peace with the nationalities within Hungary. The imposed constitution of Olmütz of 4 March 1849 brought about a fundamental change in the attitudes of the nationalities. It became clear that the leaders of the empire had no intention of satisfying the nationalities' demands for territory and self-government: on the contrary, their avowed goal was centralization of the empire. The prospects of agreement were enhanced by the recall of the Serbian volunteers between March and May 1849 and by the positive influence of the Hungarian triumphs in the southern territories. In the course of the negotiations, however, the Serbian demand that the Vojvodina become autonomous proved insuperable for the Hungarian side. And with the appearance of Jelačić in the southern territories the supporters of a military resolution once again gained the upper hand. In June 1849 Djordje Stratimirović,

38 *KLÖM*, XV, pp. 473–74, 480–83.

39 *KLÖM*, XV, pp. 181–84

one of the leaders of the Serbian insurgents, said that in return for the rank of general he would take his men over to the Hungarian side. Prime Minister Szemere produced a detailed draft of the terms for this step, but nothing came of the proposal.⁴⁰

The spring of 1849 also seemed to offer an opportunity to bring an end to Hungarian-Romanian hostilities. Ethnic Romanians in the national assembly concluded from the Hungarian successes that they had to make peace with the Hungarians otherwise their movement would be crushed. One of them, Ioan Dragoş, contacted Avram Iancu, the guerrilla leader. The negotiations were going well until the leader of some Hungarian irregulars thoughtlessly attacked Abrudbánya (Abrud), where the talks were being held. In the renewed fighting that ensued hundreds of lives were lost. The campaign to put down the uprising failed, and the guerrillas kept a significant proportion of the Hungarian forces in Transylvania pinned down on the very eve of the Russian intervention.⁴¹

The Hungarians were thus unable to find allies within their country prior to the next phase of the war. The army of Piedmont and the Sardinian Kingdom, which was virtually an overseas ally of the Hungarians, broke the August 1848 ceasefire agreement with Austria and launched an offensive, but was decisively defeated by the Austrian army under Radetzky at Novara on 23 March. The Hungarians' overseas agents were able to establish only informal links with representatives of official bodies and although they managed to win over a section of the press and of those politicians not in power, this was not enough to reverse the pro-Austrian stance of European states. Austria, by contrast, was able to invoke the treaty of Münchenthal of 1833 to call upon the aid of the Tsar's armies, as well as securing the consent of the western great powers to such an intervention. Talks paving the way for the Russian intervention began at the end of March and a preliminary agreement had been reached even before news of the Hungarian Declaration of Independence reached Vienna. Tsar Nicholas I felt constrained to intervene with a military presence mighty enough to crush the revolution on its own. He therefore decided to despatch 200,000 soldiers, holding some 80,000 in reserve.

40 Szemere, *Jellemrajzok*, pp. 512–17.

41 Ambrus Miskolczy, 'Roumanian-Hungarian Attempts at Reconciliation in the Spring of 1849 in Transylvania', in *Annales Universitatis Scientiarum Budapestiensis de Rolando Eötvös Nominatae. Sectio Historica*, XXI, 1981; György Spira, 'A túlpartról üzenő Ioan Dragoş', in Spira, *Jottányit se a negyvennyolcból!*, Budapest, 1989; Róbert Hermann, *Az abrudbányai tragédia 1849. Hatvani Imre szabadcsapatvezér és a magyar-román megbékélés meghiúsulása*, Budapest, 1999.

Since the Austrian army numbered 170,000, the Hungarian force of 170,000 had thus to face a total of 370,000 troops.

At the news of the Russian intervention Kossuth and the Szemere government launched diplomatic protests but to little effect, and within the country, too, tried to prepare the populace for the unexpected blow with publicity that was more show than substance.⁴² Even the formulation of military strategy was affected by internal power games. The friendly relations that Kossuth had cultivated with many of his generals had a downside, in that the independent commanders Bem, Dembinski, and Perczel received the government's military orders more in the spirit of a friendly request than as a command. Kossuth too began to play a complex game. As the fact that Görgei was both minister of defence and commander-in-chief worried him considerably, he constantly — and rightly — drew attention to the problems of his holding such a dual post. At the same time, towards the end of June in Nagyvárad (Oradea), he discussed with Bem the possibility of his taking over the post of commander-in-chief, and not only kept this secret but actually denied it to Görgei's face.⁴³ Relations between the commander-in-chief and the governing president were, in any case, tense. Görgei did not forgive Kossuth for claiming that it was the wish of the army that independence should have been declared on 14 April and thought — mistakenly — that this was the step that had led to the Russian intervention.

Görgei was certain that his only hope of success lay in inflicting a defeat on the main Austrian army before the arrival of the bulk of the slow-moving Russian troops. Reinforcements from the southern territories did not, however, materialize because of the defeat suffered by Mór Perczel at Káty (Kać) on 7 June. Thus the attempted counter-attack along the River Váh proved abortive. At Görgei's suggestion on 26 June the Hungarian government agreed that the main Hungarian forces should be concentrated at Komárom. However, two days later one of Görgei's corps

42 Many of the documents relating to British and French diplomacy of the time are reproduced in Eugene Horváth, *Origins of the Crimean War. Documents Relative to the Russian Intervention in Hungary and Transylvania 1848–1849*, Reprinted from the South Eastern Affairs, Budapest, 1937, pp. 120–280. See also 'Hungarian Protest against Russian Intervention' in *Correspondence*, pp. 344–46. Dénes Jánossy, *Great Britain and Kossuth*, Budapest, 1937, pp. 19–30, 113–16; Thomas Kabdebo, *Diplomat in Exile: Francis Pulszky's Political Activities in England, 1849–1860*, East European Monographs, No. LVI, New York, 1979, pp. 15–30; Deák, *Lawful Revolution*, pp. 291–300; Éva H. Haraszti, *Kossuth as an English Journalist*, Budapest, 1990, 38–40.

43 Sebő Vukovics, pp. 121–22; *KLÖM*, XV, 588–89.

suffered a defeat at Győr and this led the council of ministers to abandon, on 29 June, the Komárom plan in favour of a concentration in the Tisza-Maros triangle. The decision was of dubious constitutionality, having been taken in the absence of the minister of defence and the commander-in-chief. Görgei wrote to Kossuth on 30 June that despite the defeat at Győr he still regarded the Komárom plan as the one to be preferred. This was followed by the delegation bringing the latest decision of the government. Though disgruntled, Görgei sent word that he would give way. The two letters, however, reached Kossuth in reverse order and, not noticing the reference numbers, he took the text of the letter written first (which he read second) as a retraction of the later letter (which he read first). Angered by what he thought was the recalcitrance of Görgei, Kossuth removed him from the post of commander-in-chief and replaced him with Lieutenant-General Lázár Mészáros.⁴⁴

The decision was unfortunate, if only because a few days later, on 7 July, Kossuth offered the government and the newly-appointed commander-in-chief a new plan for concentrating the armed forces.⁴⁵ Kossuth thought that the best solution would be to have himself as commander-in-chief. As the government did not support this proposal, he sought to fulfil his own aspirations for the top post by naming Perczel once again as army commander. But as Perczel had begun to operate independently, on 9 July he again offered the post of commander-in-chief to Bem.⁴⁶

Görgei's main army defeated the forces of Feldzeugmeister Julius Haynau at Komárom on 2 July, but he was forced to decamp for Szeged. At Vác his progress was blocked by the main Russian army under Field-Marshal Pashkevich, but Görgei avoided them and reached the Tisza by a circuitous northern route. Outflanking them, he reached every point earlier than the Russians and pinned down with one-sixth of the Hungarian troops one-third of the intervening forces: four times the number of its own forces. On the other fronts the fortunes of the

⁴⁴ Görgei, *My Life and Acts*, pp. 387–430, 446–47; Klapka, *Memoirs*, I, pp. 75–134; Deák, *Lawful Revolution*, pp. 307–08; László Pusztaszeri, 'General Görgey's Military and Political Role. Civil-Military Relations during the Hungarian Revolution' (hereafter *Görgei's Role*), in Király, *Era of Revolution*, pp. 481–93; Ian W. Roberts, *Nicholas I and the Russian Intervention in Hungary*, London, 1991 (hereafter *Russian Intervention*), pp. 148–51; Róbert Hermann 'The Summer Campaign' (hereafter *Summer Campaign*), in Bona, *Military History*, pp. 385–90, 393–98.

⁴⁵ KLÖM, XV, pp. 683–86; Hermann, *Summer Campaign*, p. 402.

⁴⁶ KLÖM, XV, pp. 694–95.

Hungarians were mixed. In the southern territories the military situation was stabilized by the end of June and in the second half of July the Hungarian forces under Antal Vetter forced Jelačić back to the right bank of the Danube. By the beginning of August, Bem in Transylvania had prevented the Russian-Austrian forces from reaching the Great Plain. Though he lost the majority of the battles he fought, Bem always found a way of imposing his will on the enemy.⁴⁷

At the beginning of July, therefore, the capital was once more in danger. The session of the National Assembly prorogued at the end of May was thus able to hold only two closed and one public session in Pest: then the members had once again to pack their bags. The ministries, too, were able to function in Pest for only three weeks. On 11 July the capital was occupied by Austrian and Russian troops.

Parallel to the progress of the fighting, though rather late and more in principle than in practice, a solution was found to the conflict with the nationalities. This solution was brought about by outside forces. The leading politicians of the revolution in Wallachia, defeated in 1848, all considered the Russian and Austrian great powers a danger to the movement for Romanian unity and therefore offered to mediate between the Hungarians and the Romanians. It was their peace plan, developed together with the Hungarian government, that formed part of the decision accepted by the Hungarian National Assembly on 28 July 1849. Though this still refused to grant territorial autonomy to the various nationalities, it recognized their right to develop as free nations and, to this end, guaranteed them extensive language rights in the community, in the church, and in the legal sphere. The proposal was accepted by the National Assembly in the absence of Kossuth, though its proposer Szemere naturally had Kossuth's agreement. The proposal was later made public, bearing both their signatures.⁴⁸

From early July there were increasing signs of tension between Kossuth and the Szemere government. In a memorandum to Kossuth dated 21 July Szemere offered, in the light of the unsatisfactory structure

47 Klapka, *Memoirs*, I, pp. 135–51, 186–216; Deak, *Lawful Revolution*, pp. 309–10; Pusztaszeri Görgei's Role, pp. 493–508; Hermann, *Summer Campaign*, pp. 399–412; Eligiusz Kozłowski, 'The Embodiment of the East Central European Revolutionary Warrior: General Józef Bem, 1794–1850', in Király, *Era of Revolution*, pp. 149–53.

48 Deak, *Lawful Revolution*, pp. 313–15; András Gergely, 'The Hungarian Nationalities Act of 1849', in Ignác Romsics, Béla K. Király (eds), *Geopolitics in the Danube Region. Hungarian Reconciliation Efforts 1848–1998*, Atlantic Studies on Society in Change, No. 97, Budapest, 1998, pp. 51–55.

of the political system, the resignation of his government. In Szemere's view, the most striking contradiction of the system was the dual responsibility it entailed: substantive decisions could be taken by the Governor only with the countersignature of the ministers, while the actions of the ministers in matters of substance were valid only with the countersignature of the Governor. 'If you give us free rein, you are paralysed, if we yield, we are deprived of asserting our will ...' To complicate matters further, Kossuth could not in effect be held responsible for the decisions he took, yet no-one but he had an overview of the entire terrain. Thus, the responsibility lay with the government, yet it could not *de facto* govern. Even dictatorship would be an improvement on this state of affairs:

'With leaders of whom half refuse to obey and are in their own sphere active virtually without restraint, it is not possible to come to the rescue of the homeland. These pocket dictators need a proper dictator above them.'

This dictator could — Szemere had continued — have been either Kossuth or Görgei. 'You possess many more sterling qualities than Görgei, but the latter has some that you do not possess which are yet essential: rigour, consistency, and indomitableness on a course once embarked upon.' Szemere considered that Kossuth would not be afraid of exercising such power but would not like to be called a dictator. 'Yet it is the name that is needed — there is power in the name. It would be a crime to exercise such power once the country has been saved, but equally wrong not to exercise it in order to secure its salvation.' If Kossuth did not approve, Szemere asked that he take his own place, for he wished, so he explained, by resigning, to promote the salvation of his country.⁴⁹

Szemere informed his fellow ministers of the contents of the memorandum and gave it to Kossuth only at the ministerial council of 24 July. In his reply the following day Kossuth asked Szemere not to press the ideas in the memorandum: he was as ready to accept responsibility for his own actions as the members of the government were for theirs. He rejected the notion that their actions were at cross purposes. Nor was he prepared to be a dictator. 'I am not one to let myself be constrained to do anything,' he insisted. 'If I can be active in some other wise, I shall be glad to be so.'⁵⁰

Szemere replied to Kossuth's letter the same day. As Kossuth had meanwhile left to visit Görgei, he wrote to them both. 'Let the two of you

49 Szemere, *Jellemrajzok*, pp. 568–70. Extracts in German translation in Szemere, *Charakterskizzen*, III, pp. 153–59. See also Deak, *Lawful Revolution*, p. 317.

50 *KLÖM*, XV, pp. 776–77.

seize power — if you will, let Görgei be dictator in the military sphere while you are one in the civil sphere,’ he wrote to Kossuth. The resignation of the government, however, he considered vital: ‘I would say that we should walk along the path if I did not think it better for the homeland to say that you should walk on without us. But with Görgei, not against him.’ The letter to Görgei was not as unequivocal. He informed the general that he had handed in his resignation and then presented his views on the necessity for a dictatorship. But then he continued: ‘I am unable to decide whether power could be shared in such a way that you exercise it in the military sphere and he in the civil,’ which at that point in time could have meant: if Görgei regarded Kossuth as dangerous or superfluous he should seize the opportunity to detain him in camp.⁵¹

Though he received the letter, Kossuth did not reply to it; at least, not in writing. From Görgei there was no response at all. The meeting between the two was also deferred, because the Russian forces had crossed the Tisza. So Kossuth and Görgei were unable to discuss the chances or means of implementing a dictatorship of the kind proposed by Szemere. The loss of Szeged soon afterwards also removed from the agenda any theoretical discussions on the nature of the government of the country.

At the end of July the concentration of forces in the Tisza-Maros triangle was achieved. When Lieutenant-General Lázár Mészáros resigned as commander-in-chief, Kossuth and the ministerial council decided, on 30 July, that the command of the forces around Szeged should be given to the same Lieutenant-General Henryk Dembinski who had earlier proved himself a failure as leader. Though he was the éminence grise behind the Szeged concentration plan, he now considered the trenches there undefendable. He did not take on the numerically smaller forces of Haynau; he simply handed over Szeged and retreated towards Temesvár (Timișoara), then in Austrian hands. In vain did the government order him to Arad: Dembinski gave higher priority to the defence of the road to the Turkish border. Kossuth meanwhile appointed Bem commander-in-chief: Bem duly appeared at Temesvár on 9 August. He took on Haynau but was obliged to withdraw when his forces ran short of ammunition. Panic broke out during the retreat and only some 20,000 of the 50,000-strong army managed to re-group at Lugos (Lugoj).⁵²

51 Szemere, *Jellemrajzok*, pp. 173–77. Extracts in German translation in Szemere, *Characterskizzen*, II, pp. 87–97.

52 Deak, *Lawful Revolution*, pp. 318–20; Roberts, *Russian Intervention*, pp. 172–75; Hermann, *Summer Campaign*, pp. 412–15.

Görgei, arriving at Arad on 9/10 August, was thus on his own. In the course of his campaign he had made contact with the leadership of the Russian main army. The Russians wanted to get this — in their view — most dangerous of Hungarian generals to lay down his arms as soon as possible. Görgei hoped his discussions would help to drive a wedge between the Russian and Austrian allies. Though Kossuth disapproved of the general's talking to the enemy's military leadership without authorization from the government, he still considered that this was an opportunity not to be missed. On 10 August the Hungarian council of ministers decided to offer the Hungarian crown to a member of the Tsar's family and at the same time declared that if the Russians were not prepared to discuss this nor to mediate between them and Franz Joseph, the Hungarian army was ready to lay down its arms before the Russians. It was after this meeting of the council of ministers that the last personal encounter between Kossuth and Görgei took place. They spoke of the chances of continuing the fight, but both knew that that the battle of Temesvár the previous day had already sealed their fate.⁵³

After news came of the defeat at Temesvár, the options narrowed down to those summarized in the final paragraph of the ministerial decree mentioned. The government first appointed Görgei commander-in-chief, then when he demanded that the government resign, Kossuth and the majority of his ministers agreed to this.⁵⁴ None the less, the government did not formally disband and among the ministers who did not resign were the prime minister and minister for internal affairs Bertalan Szemere, minister for foreign affairs Kázmér Batthyány, and finance minister Ferencz Duschek, who at this time happened to be in Lugos.

With the defeat at Temesvár Kossuth thought that all was lost, and after signing the order giving Görgei dictatorial powers and the farewell decree of the government, he shaved off his beard, re-styled his hair and left Arad accompanied by his adjutant Lieutenant-Colonel Sándor Asbóth. On 11 August he met Major-General Ernő Poeltenberg and Lieutenant-Colonel Lajos Beniczky, who were returning from the Russian camp. He learnt from them that Görgei had been mistaken in thinking that he would have been able to achieve anything with the Russians if he had

53 Görgei, *My Life and Acts*, pp. 554–72; Deak, *Lawful Revolution*, p. 320; Pusztaszeri, *Görgei's Role*, pp. 508–511; Roberts, *Russian Intervention*, pp. 177–79; Hermann, *Summer Campaign*, pp. 415–16.

54 *KLÖM*, XV, pp. 839–46; Görgei, *My Life and Acts*, pp. 572–86; Deak, *Lawful revolution*, pp. 320–21; Pusztaszeri, *Görgei's Role*, p. 511; Szemere, *Charakterskizzen*, pp. 114–19; *Correspondence*, p. 437.

remained commander-in-chief. For the essence of the response of Russian cavalry general Theodor Rüdiger was that the Russians had come to Hungary not to talk but to fight and the only discussions they were prepared to have would concern the timing of the Hungarians' unconditional surrender. They did, however, suggest that in the case of a Hungarian capitulation they would be able to protect the lives at least of those who surrendered.⁵⁵ The military council convoked by Görgei decided on surrender to the Russians soon afterwards. This took place at Szőlős (Seleuş) on 13 August.

In the company of Poeltenberg and his friend, there was to be found Szemere and Kázmér Batthyány. Kossuth headed with them through Radna for Lugos. In Radna he met finance minister Ferencz Duscheck who asked him what he was to do with the state treasury. Kossuth referred him to Görgei. By this time he had heard that the remnants of the southern army were gathering at Lugos. Szemere and Batthyány planned to continue the fight with the help of the army at Lugos and they were joined by Kossuth, to whom they made clear that, despite his resignation, they continued to regard themselves as ministers.

During these fateful days Kossuth's mood continued to swing, with optimism and pessimism alternating in his statements. In Lugos he found an army more orderly than he had imagined. After the defeat at Temesvár, Bem and his chief of staff, the English-born Richard Guyon, did all they could to pull together from the shattered main army as substantial a force as possible. But the various divisions were in differing shape. Kossuth found Károly Vécsey's Fifth Army Corps in 'good order', but other generals, for example Arisztid Dessewffy and György Kmety, declared that their troops would scatter to the winds at the first sound of cannon.⁵⁶ So Kossuth thought that all was lost. On 12 August, he wrote to Görgei from Lugos. He gave his reasons for resigning and declared that he would regard it as treason if 'every possible attempt were not made to save the nation. I would regard it as treason if you were to enter into negotiations on behalf only of the army and not the nation.' The purpose of the letter was, however, not to resume power but to shift the burden of responsibility. This is also suggested in the letter's final sentence: 'I owed

55 Lajos Steier, *Beniczky Lajos bányavidéki kormánybiztos és honvédezredes visszaemlékezései és jelentései az 1848/49-iki szabadságharcról és tót mozgalomról*, Budapest, 1924, pp. 345–54, 686–88. Rüdiger's letter is in Görgei, *My Life and Acts*, p. 587.

56 KLÖM, XV, pp. 851–53; *Correspondence*, pp. 367–68; Klapka, *Memoirs*, II, p. 28.

this statement to myself and to the nation, and I wish to have it recorded in the official Gazette.'⁵⁷

At Lugos Kossuth was joined by Colonel Wladyslaw Zamoyski and the Polish and Italian legions, and under their protection Kossuth continued to Orsova. On the way he learnt that the local guard at Orsova, which was meant to protect the escape route, had on Bem's orders left its post and decamped northwards. Kossuth ordered these forces back. In Teregova he received Bem's letter trying to persuade him to resume the reins of power. Kossuth however thought that he had no role to play in what remained of the fight and in his reply made his resumption of power dependent on conditions he knew could not be fulfilled: first, he wanted it to be Görgei's army that called upon him to take over; second, Bem would have to score some military successes; and third, the mint would have to resume operation and start printing banknotes again. In his reply he stressed that he was 'just a simple citizen, nothing more'.⁵⁸ Having written the letter, he continued towards the Danube crossing at Orsova. In Serbia, on the other side of the river, Kossuth could have counted on anything but a friendly reception. It is not surprising therefore that he and his entourage did not cross the Danube but, after the news of the surrender at Szőlős on 17 August, crossed a bridge over a brook marking the Wallachian border and entered Ottoman territory. From here he was accompanied to the border crossing point at Turnu Severin, whence he continued to Vidin, in Turkey.⁵⁹

Just over ten months after his appointment as president of the OHB Kossuth had lost his position at the helm of power. This also meant the end of an independent Hungary. However, soon after he heard of Görgei's surrender of 13 August, Kossuth decided to resume power. He argued that in bestowing the most powerful position in the land upon Görgei his intention had been to save the homeland and not to surrender it and, since by his surrender Görgei had become 'the craven executioner of his homeland',⁶⁰ the highest authority now reverted to himself, Kossuth.

Such legalistic sophistry did not, however, spring from the delusions of grandeur common among leading émigré politicians. Kossuth was right

57 *KLÖM*, XV, pp. 849–50. See also Deak, *Lawful Revolution*, pp. 321–22.

58 *KLÖM*, XV, pp. 851–53. Extracts in *Correspondence*, pp. 367–68; Klapka, *Memoirs*, II, pp. 27–30.

59 Roberts, *Russian Intervention*, pp. 192–93.

60 The quotation comes from a letter dated 12 September 1849 and addressed to Hungarian diplomatic agents abroad. Tamás Katona (ed.) Lajos Kossuth, *Írások és beszédeket 1848–1849-ből*, Budapest, 1987, 1994, p. 508. See also Deak, *Lawful Revolution*, pp. 339–40.

in thinking that, if ever the moment came for the restoration of an independent Hungary, it was unlikely that any leader other than himself would enjoy the confidence of the country as a whole. And he would be able to exploit this confidence only if he were not just one of the many exiles but acknowledged as their leader.

In the course of the decade that followed, Kossuth tried repeatedly to extend his leadership over the entire émigré community, but these attempts failed again and again. Kossuth thought that the liberation struggle had been lost because he did not wield enough power to impose his will on the army. The exiles who resisted his efforts considered, on the contrary, that Kossuth had failed to use effectively such power as he already had.⁶¹

For Kossuth it was the Crimean War that brought the realization that the independence of Hungary could not be achieved without the aid of the great powers. He was sure that to achieve this he had to create unity, but only in 1859 did he realize that this unity could be achieved by means other than dictatorial. This recognition was reflected in the establishment by Kossuth, László Teleki and György Klapka of the Magyar Nemzeti Igazgatóság (Hungarian National Directorate) in 1859. It is quite another matter that the unification of the exile community was a necessary but not a sufficient condition for the relaunch of the Hungarian struggle for independence. For the latter, the support of a European great power would have been necessary. Such support was not forthcoming either in 1849 or subsequently. This led Kossuth to regard all his activity between 1849 and 1867 as having been completely wasted. Yet even if it was not his intention, as the result of his labours the exiles that he led helped Hungary regain a measure of its sovereignty through the Ausgleich of 1867.

61 See the articles by Bertalan Szemere and Kázmér Batthyány in *The Times*, *The Morning Courier and New York Enquirer*, and the *Examiner*, reprinted in Dénes Jánossy, *A Kossuth-emigráció Angliában és Amerikában 1851–1852*, Vol. II/2, Budapest, 1948, pp. 158–71, 290–94, 463–76.

Kossuth and the Emancipation of the Serfs

Gábor Pajkossy

The emancipation of the serfs in Hungary was proclaimed by the laws of April 1848. The laws declared that all urbarial services and obligations should cease forthwith and that landlords be compensated by the state. Patrimonial courts were abolished and the Catholic clergy renounced tithes without compensation. While leaving many problems unresolved and, indeed, creating new ones, the April Laws led without doubt to fundamental changes.

Serfs in Hungary had been allowed in 1840 to redeem themselves by an outright payment to their lords. Most peasants were, however, unable to afford the costs involved, particularly as they themselves were expected to negotiate the cost of redemption and pay it entirely themselves. As a result, only one per cent of serfs became free peasants and less than two per cent of arable lands and meadows cultivated by serfs were transformed into peasant property. By contrast, the April Laws freed all serfs and cotters (*zsallérek*) from feudal subordination. The laws related only to urbarial lands and contained no provisions regarding demesne or 'allodial' lands. Notwithstanding these limitations, the April Laws transferred to the peasants 74 per cent of the land which they had hitherto cultivated in exchange for feudal services. This amounted to 55 per cent of all arable land and meadows. Moreover, the compensation due to landlords was assumed by the state. The provisions of the new legislation also applied to Croatia and Slavonia. In Transylvania, the emancipation of the serfs was enacted, albeit under somewhat different terms, in June 1848.

The emancipation of the serfs in the Habsburg Monarchy first took place in Hungary, but 1848 saw it proclaimed in every other crownland under Habsburg rule except for Lombardy and Venice (where in any case no serfdom existed by this time). In Galicia, as in the lands of the Hungarian crown, the state assumed the burden of compensating landlords. In the rest of Cisleithania, however, the state underwrote only one third of the cost of redemption. Unlike in Hungary, however, the law on *Grundentlastung* passed by the Reichstag in September 1848 also allowed

peasants to redeem lands that they cultivated but which properly belonged to the lord's demesne. Five years later, the imperial Urbarial Patent of March 1853 reconsidered the matter in respect of arrangements in Hungary. In doing so it disregarded all measures taken by the Hungarian legislation and the Hungarian government between September 1848 and April 1849. The Patent upheld the provisions of the April Laws relating to urbarial lands *sensu stricto*, and thus maintained their earlier transformation into the private property of peasant proprietors. Regarding the remaining urbarial lands and other lands cultivated by former serfs, it declared that they had to be redeemed by the peasants themselves or passed to the landlords. It should be noted that the Patent ordered the mandatory division of pastures among landlords and peasants. In this way, peasants acquired lands the quantity of which came close to or even exceeded that of the lands they lost. Such were the intricacies of arrangements of tenure and landholding that it took a further 48 years to complete the work of emancipation. Indeed, it was not until two years after Kossuth's death that the law (Article XXV of 1896) regulating the redemption of certain types of demesne land cultivated by cotters was finally passed. Nevertheless, the foundation of all this was laid by the April Laws and the Urbarial Patent.¹

The emancipation of the serfs in Hungary and the person of Lajos Kossuth are indissolubly linked. The inhabitants of the peasant towns on the Great Hungarian Plain which Kossuth visited during his recruiting drive in September 1848 attributed their freedom to Kossuth's policy. Nevertheless, Kossuth was celebrated as the 'liberator' of the 'overburdened peasant folk' well before March 1848. True, this epithet was coined by noble reformers and not by the peasants themselves, but it was not undeserved.

Kossuth entered national politics in 1832 and rose steadily; by 1847 he was a leading figure in the Opposition party. After March 1848, he enjoyed political influence which was unparalleled in Hungarian history. From 1849 up the mid-1860s, as the outstanding Hungarian statesman in

1 János Varga, *A jobbágyfelszabadítás kivívása 1848-ban*, Budapest, 1971 (hereafter, *Jobbágyfelszabadítás*), pp. 343–55. See also János Varga, *Typen und Probleme des bauerlichen Grundbesitzes in Ungarn, 1767–1849*, Budapest, 1965, pp. 128–36. István Orosz, 'A jobbágyfelszabadítás és végrehajtása, in Péter Gunst (ed.), *A magyar agrártársadalom a jobbágyság felszabadításától napjainkig*, Budapest, 1998, pp. 55–136 (hereafter, Orosz, 'Jobbágyfelszabadítás'); Helmut Rumpler, *Eine Chance für Mitteleuropa. Bürgerliche Emanzipation und Staatsverfall in der Habsburgermonarchie*, Vienna, 1997, p. 284. All figures derived from Varga and Orosz are given in round numbers.

exile, he continued to play an important role in politics, but, of course, his plans could no longer be put into practice. The emancipation of the serfs was one of the key elements of his political strategy from the very beginning of his career. He was the first (or among the first) to articulate concepts such as mandatory redemption, general emancipation of the serfs, and compensation of landlords by the state, which later became the basic elements of the April Laws, and during March 1848 his political skill and acumen were vital in achieving these goals.²

According to supporters of the Old Regime, the emancipation of the serfs went completely against the fundamental laws of Hungary. According to the *Tripartitum* published by Stephen Werbőczy in 1517 (Part 3, title 30), all land and all rights to property in land belonged to the landlord (*totius terrae proprietas ad dominum terrestrem spectat et pertinet*). The Supreme Court of Hungary, in a judgment delivered in 1739, declared that non-nobles were incapable of acquiring landed estate. Werbőczy's association of the right to land with noble status was accepted not only by conservatives, but also by liberals like Count István Széchenyi and Baron Miklós Wesselényi. The government, some prominent professors of law and Ferenc Deák, a leading liberal politician and legal authority in his time, however, saw things differently. By reference to the extensive legislation on relations between landlords and serfs, including the *Urbarium* of Queen Maria Theresa, they were able to claim that the power of landlords to dispose of urbarial holdings had long been restricted and thus, by implication, that their rights of ownership were circumscribed and incomplete.³ Kossuth, however, held an altogether contrary view. Throughout his career, he maintained that landlords were not the real owners of urbarial plots; instead, what they owned was only the feudal services and dues attached to the plots.⁴ This radical interpretation allowed Kossuth to develop new and far-reaching ideas relating to the problem of peasant property.

The diet of 1832–36, also called the 'First Reform Diet', discussed giving property rights to serfs and removing the exclusive right of the

2 István Szabó, 'Kossuth és a jobbágyfelszabadítás', in Szabó, *Jobbágyok – parasztok. Értekezések a magyar parasztság történetéből*, Budapest, 1976, pp. 253–332 (hereafter, Szabó, 'Kossuth'). Szabó's study was first published in *Századok*, 86, 1952, pp. 509–92.

3 István Orosz, 'Az úrbéres föld tulajdonjogi helyzete Kossuth nézeteiben', in (eds) István Orosz and Ferenc Pölöskei, *Nemzeti és polgári átalakulás a XIX. században Magyarországon. Tanulmányok Szabad György 70. születésnapjára*, Budapest, 1994, pp. 215–24 (hereafter, Orosz, 'Az úrbéres föld').

4 Orosz, 'Az úrbéres föld', pp. 218–21.

nobility to the ownership of landed estate, but in April 1833 both motions were rejected by the conservatives. The idea of voluntary redemption emerged upon the failure of these proposals. Voluntary redemption was, however, not a radical innovation, as some serf communities had by that time already redeemed themselves.⁵ Both conservatives and the government in Vienna considered the motion for voluntary redemption to be anti-constitutional and revolutionary, and in December 1834 they engineered its failure.⁶ From this time on, the issues of redemption and compensation were to remain at the heart of all discussions on the emancipation of the serfs.

Both liberals and conservatives agreed that serfs, by means of redemption, could become free peasants. Among these groups debate ranged instead around whether redemption should be voluntary or mandatory and, if mandatory, whether redemption should be paid partially or gradually, and whether it should be implemented simultaneously across the whole country. Count Széchenyi, a liberal reformer (who never, however, belonged to the liberal opposition), based his reform programme on different principles. In his famous book, *Stadium*, written in 1831–32 and published in 1833, he proposed that serfs should be given rights to property. Széchenyi's proposal was not contrary to the principle of redemption which, for tactical reasons, Széchenyi alternately supported and opposed.⁷ Kossuth again had other ideas. In a book written in 1833 and intended for publication, he argued that landlords might by legislative fiat be obliged to accede to the demands of their peasants and to permit their redemption, quite irrespective of their own wishes as landlords. By bringing the state into the equation, Kossuth challenged the prevailing concept which regarded redemption as a private matter involving only the parties concerned. Kossuth's work was, however, only published 130 years later and there is no evidence that it circulated in manuscript form.⁸

Voluntary redemption, as enacted by Law IX of 1840, was considered by defenders of the Old Regime as the maximum they could agree to. The

⁵ István Barta, 'Korai örökválltság-szerződések', *Agrártörténeti Szemle*, 3, 1961, pp. 94–115.

⁶ Kossuth, in his handwritten reports, minuted all proceedings of the diet. See Lajos Kossuth, *Országgyűlési Tudósítások*, ed. István Barta, 5 vols, Budapest, 1948–61 (*Kossuth Lajos összes munkái*, hereafter *KLÖM*, vols i–v).

⁷ István Orosz, 'Széchenyi István a jobbágyrendszer megszüntetéséről', in Orosz, *Széchenyi és kortársai. Válogatott tanulmányok a reformkorról*, Debrecen, 2000 (hereafter, *Széchenyi és kortársai*), pp. 79–88. First published in 1991.

⁸ *KLÖM*, VI, pp. 368–87; see also István Barta, *A fiatal Kossuth*, Budapest, 1966, pp. 200–36.

law proved, however, a failure. Out of more than 10,000 serf communities, fewer than 100 grasped the opportunity. The basic reason for failure was the peasants' own lack of funds.⁹ Kossuth challenged the law even though at this time many liberals still entertained false hopes with regard to its potential effects. In February 1841, in one of the earliest numbers of *Pesti Hírlap*, Kossuth called for 'free land' (*szabad föld*). Kossuth had mainly the urbarial lands of the serfs in mind, to which end he urged a general redemption of their burdens. His programme also implied, however, abolition of the law of entail (*aviticitas*), which prevented landlords from selling their land. In the following months, *Pesti Hírlap* published a number of articles discussing the financial aspects of redemption, but they all proved to be wholly unrealistic. Thus, in August 1841, Kossuth proposed that serfs be individually given the right to purchase the land which they farmed, which was an idea that he had first embraced eight years earlier. At the same time, he suggested that serfs should be allowed to redeem themselves by ceding a portion of their plots to their lords.¹⁰ After encountering sharp criticism, Kossuth dropped this idea (although, curiously, he took it up again in the autumn of 1847).¹¹ Eventually, Kossuth came to the conclusion that the general redemption of the serfs could not be carried through unless the landlords were compensated, at least partially, by the state. He also saw, however, that the nobles' tax exemption made this proposal unworkable. During the course of 1841, Kossuth did his best to spark a public debate on redemption and the emancipation of the serfs, but neither he nor anyone else could come up with a comprehensive and viable alternative to Law IX of 1840. So great was his disillusionment that, for a time, Kossuth stopped publishing editorials on this topic altogether.

As editor of the newspaper with the largest readership, Kossuth was able to influence the topics and tone of public debate, but he also had to keep in mind that the majority of liberals were political moderates. He himself had long been convinced that political transformation had to be carried out under the guidance of the nobility. By the middle of 1843,

9 István Orosz, 'Az örökváltság elmélete és gyakorlata, in Orosz, *Széchenyi és kortársai*, pp. 151–62 (first published in 1976); János Varga, 'Az engedőleges örökváltság mérlege', *Acta Academiae Paedagogicae Nyíregyházensis. Történettudomány*, 10/B, 1985, pp. 21–28.

10 *Pesti Hírlap*, 1841, 13, and 69–71; Szabó, 'Kossuth', pp. 262–68.

11 Domokos Kosáry, 'Kossuth Lajos harca a feudális és gyarmati elnyomás ellen', in *Emlékkönyv Kossuth Lajos születésének 150. évfordulójára*, ed. Z.I. Tóth, 2 vols, Budapest, 1952, i, pp. 1–86 (p. 67); Szabó, 'Kossuth', p. 294; *Pesti Hírlap*, 1847, 947 (September 10, 1847).

however, he had come to the conclusion that 'the nobility alone is unable to regenerate our country'. He accordingly adopted a more radical tone, addressing himself to non-noble and urban readers and articulating what he called 'the whole truth'.¹² This radical turn cost him his editorialship of *Pesti Hírlap*.

In March 1846, following the peasant rising in Galicia, Kossuth once again took up the subject of emancipation. Kossuth was alarmed both by the bloodshed and by the news of the changing attitude of the imperial government to social reform. If Vienna re-adopted its earlier policy towards the peasantry and initiated a general redemption, Kossuth concluded, the nobility and reformers would be fired on from all sides and threatened by a jacquerie. Raising the alarm, he wrote, 'We are on the brink of disaster, even the best kind of partial redemption comes too late; delaying the treatment will lead inevitably to death'. Five years earlier, Kossuth had considered the nobility's tax exemption to be the main obstacle to a general redemption. Now, in 1846, he advocated general taxation as the way of promoting what he termed 'the dissolution of urbarial relations'. Like other noble reformers, Kossuth had argued that the nobility should pay county taxes, but he had opposed their payment of military and other state taxes. His logic was simple, since, while the former was under the control of the noble estates, the diet had no say in the state budget. In a letter written to Baron Wesselényi in May 1846, Kossuth advocated a general redemption combined with full compensation of landlords, to be paid by serfs and the state on an equal basis. At the same time, he suggested that the nobility should pay its share of the military tax, and the revenues from this be used to compensate landlords. Both this plan and a later modified version were, from the very first, vaguely formulated and economically unworkable. Nevertheless, this was a bold and radical idea which alarmed Wesselényi and other members of the opposition.¹³ Three newspaper articles written by Kossuth on the subject were banned by the censors. This obliged Kossuth to put forward his views more circumspectly which, in turn, led to increased vagueness on his part. Subsequently, Kossuth maintained that a general redemption and general taxation should both be realized, but he gradually switched from 'compensation by the state' to what he called 'financial operation of the state' or 'intervention by the state' and 'participation by the state'. As

12 Quotations from 'A kérdések legkényesbíke' and 'Kiábrándulás', *Pesti Hírlap*, 1843, 266 and 306.

13 Zoltán Ferenczi, 'Kossuth és Wesselényi s az urbér ügye', *Századok*, 36, 1902, pp. 47–68, 139–62.

István Szabó noted, Kossuth evidently wanted to appeal to the nobility. He realized, however, that he could not simultaneously advocate that the serfs be freed and that the nobles meet through general taxation much of the costs incurred by the state in paying out compensation.¹⁴

The 'conservative party' founded in 1846 advocated 'peaceful reconciliation of urbarial relations' (that is, voluntary redemption). Liberals demanded a mandatory and general redemption combined with 'intervention by the state', a phrase coined by Kossuth. Both the Opposition Manifesto and the instructions for the deputies of Pest county were worked out with Kossuth's participation. These important documents are taken by historians as the starting-point of the reforms undertaken in 1848. For tactical reasons, however, the passages concerning the emancipation of the serfs, one of the crucial points of the reform programme, were left deliberately vague.¹⁵

The Lower House, which convened in November 1847, adopted in March 1848 the principle of mandatory redemption. The bill was drafted by Móric Szentkirályi, Kossuth's fellow-deputy for Pest county. Kossuth also drafted his own bill. Both proposed that negotiations on redemption should begin if the majority of landed serfs in a village decided for it. Both also proposed that the serfs should pay compensation, but neither fixed any schedule for implementation. Both bills were drafted after the revolution in Paris and Kossuth's famous address on 3 March. The bill drafted by Szentkirályi was put on the agenda on 14 March, after news of the revolution in Vienna and of Metternich's fall had reached Pressburg. At this point, as István Orosz has pointed out, 'the leaders of the opposition seemed to have given up the idea that the emancipation of the serfs could be achieved by the diet'.¹⁶

On 15 March, however, the Lower House unanimously passed a resolution which was entirely at odds with its position of the day before. For a long time historians did not notice that the crucial moment of the emancipation of the serfs was, as István Szabó put it, 'wrapped in mystery'.¹⁷ The motives behind this sudden about-turn were uncovered by János Varga, whose book on the emancipation of the serfs in 1848 is amongst

14 Szabó, 'Kossuth', pp. 283–90; *Gróf Széchenyi István írói és hírlapi vitája Kossuth Lajossal*, 2 vols, ed. Gyula Viszota, Budapest, 1927–30, ii, pp. 989–1010.

15 *A nagybirtokos arisztokrácia ellenforradalmi szerepe 1848–49-ben*, ed. Erzsébet Andics, 3 vols, Budapest, 1952–81, i, pp. 206–16, 274–77; *KLÖM*, XI, pp. 141–57, 168–96; Szabó, 'Kossuth', pp. 288–94.

16 *KLÖM*, XI, pp. 641–44; Varga, *Jobbágyszabadság*, pp. 60–64; Orosz, 'Jobbágyszabadság', p. 76.

17 Szabó, 'Kossuth', p. 305.

the best on this subject.¹⁸ Varga discovered that on the previous day news had reached Pressburg that radical nobles in Bihar county in eastern Hungary were organizing a peasant army which would march to Pressburg and force the diet to enact legislation emancipating the serfs. After 1849, Kossuth repeatedly claimed that the nobility had acted of its own free will, and had voluntarily renounced its privileges, rights and exemptions. He attributed emancipation to economic and legal factors, and to 'respect for truth and politics'.¹⁹ The notion of a generous nobility was maintained by late nineteenth century Hungarian liberal historians whose outlook was deeply rooted in the political and cultural traditions of the nobility. It remained intact until the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian empire.²⁰ In fact, it was fear of a jacquerie that motivated the diet's hurried decision to grant full emancipation. The news, which soon proved to be a false alarm, prompted the diet to amend its resolution and on the night of 14–15 March the deputies worked out completely new principles. The new bill abolished urbarial relations and gave full compensation to landowners to be paid for by the state.

We do not know who first proposed the motion which resulted in the resolution, but, whoever it was, he must have had Kossuth's support, for Kossuth's influence in those days was unquestionable. The news from Vienna also served to shape events. As long as absolutism prevailed, the Hungarian opposition had no hope of coming to power. Their policy of putting constraints on government and making it 'responsible' was inimical to the interests of the court. But, as the opposition had a majority in the Lower House, Metternich's fall made possible for the first time the formation of a ministry under the liberal leader, Count Lajos Batthyány. The demand for an independent Hungarian government whose authority should include finance and military affairs was formulated in the hours that followed news of Metternich's fall, and within three weeks it had become reality. Throughout the Reform era and in the early months of 1848, all liberals (including Kossuth) agreed that the emancipation of the

18 Varga, *Jobbágyszabadság*, pp. 69–76.

19 Kossuth, 'Értekezés Magyarországról', in Kossuth, *Irataim az emigrációból*, 3 vols, Budapest, 1880–82, ii, pp. 133–254 (pp. 143, 166, 168–69). 'Értekezés' is an edited Hungarian version of six lectures given by Kossuth in November 1858 in Edinburgh, Glasgow, Liverpool and Plymouth. In sharp contrast to his works before 1848, Kossuth simply refers to the serfs as the tenantry.

20 The thesis was first challenged by Ervin Szabó in his *Társadalmi és párharcok a 48–49-es magyar forradalomban* which was written in 1918 and published in 1921. See also Elemér Mályusz's review of Szabó in *Századok*, 55–56, 1921–22, p. 411.

serfs and the compensation of landlords were issues that were intertwined. Now, the prospect of a jacquerie or, what was considered even worse, a peasant insurrection under skilful political leaders, pushed the deputies into proclaiming immediate emancipation. The attendant formation of a liberal government, however, helped to ease fears that landlords would not get fair compensation for, when combined with general taxation, it was now possible to conceive of this compensation being assumed by the state. Although it meant that landlords would in effect have to pay through taxation for the compensation which they received, this was considered a lesser evil than a jacquerie.

Most historians agree that the significance of the April Laws cannot be over-estimated. About nine million serfs, amounting to some 80 per cent or more of the population, became free citizens, and were liberated from forced labour and feudal subjection. On account, moreover, of Article V, several hundred thousand former serfs were given the franchise. As a consequence of the April Laws, the electorate swelled to about six per cent of the population with most of these belonging to the former ranks of the unprivileged. Several hundred thousand peasants were additionally eligible to join the National Guard.²¹ The diet, however, left several questions unanswered, for it only took measures relating to urbarial land. This meant that no decision was made concerning *remanentia* (*maradványföldek*, unregistered urbarial lands) which made up about 14 per cent of all land cultivated by serfs, and a further 10 per cent of serf land (basically clearings and vineyards) was declared to belong to the landlords, in respect of which former serfs were obliged to continue paying rent of a feudal nature. In the spring of 1848 serious conflicts arose between serfs, landlords and the authorities over rights to forests and pastures. Vine-growers, whose vineyards lay on manorial land, demanded that the tenth tax which they had to pay to landlords also be abolished. Other peasants protested that minor benefits (*minora regalia beneficia*: the right to operate a mill, run a butcher's etc) continued to belong to landlords. Members of the Lower House convened in July 1848 proposed several motions on these issues. On 15 September, after the outbreak of armed conflict between Hungary and Croatia, the House abolished the tenth levied on vineyards. In order to increase support for the Hungarian cause among both peasants and landlords, the government put forward two further bills. One eventually signed by Kossuth as minister of finance

21 Varga, *Jobbágyszabadság*, pp. 338–40; Orosz, 'Jobbágyszabadság', p. 84; Andor Csizmadia, *A magyar választási rendszer 1848–1849-ben. Az első népképviseleti választások*, Budapest, 1963, pp. 326–29.

empowered the government to sell state lands to compensate landlords. By selling this land in small parcels, Kossuth also pursued social goals with the aim of strengthening the class of smallholders. The bill signed by Deák as minister of justice on 'necessary measures in consequence of Article IX' focused on problems which the April Laws had not addressed. On account of military and political developments, however, both bills were shelved.²² Kossuth, elected to the chairmanship of the National Committee of Defence, worked for what he called the defence of the fatherland and of Hungarian liberty. To mobilize the peasantry he used the argument in his manifestos that Vienna, having already broken the April Laws with regard to the system of parliamentary government, might also restore forced labour services and tithes as well.²³ After being elected Governor-president, however, he again focused on outstanding issues of emancipation. On 19 April 1849, on the day the Declaration of Independence was passed by parliament, he published a decree concerning lands which were currently farmed by serfs but claimed by the former landlords as allegedly belonging to the demesne. The decree considered the peasants as being in actual legal possession and, as a consequence, handed over land to hundreds of thousands of peasants while offering landlords compensation by the state.²⁴ As it turned out, however, the Hungarian government did not have time to implement this decree.

In the Reform era, Kossuth played a leading and decisive role in the political debates on the emancipation of the serfs. In 1848, he had the main role in making this actually happen. Nevertheless, he was not satisfied with the simple pronouncements of the April Laws, but sought instead to make their spirit manifest. After 1849 he regarded Hungary's independence as the fundamental issue. Out of political considerations, he worked out ideas on how to improve some articles of the April Laws relating to social change. Planning a war of liberation, he promised state lands to veterans, landless cotters and to peasants living in the Military Frontier. On the whole, however, he considered the demands of the peasants as having been basically fulfilled by the April Laws, and made the regaining of independence his primary objective.

22 *Az 1848/49. évi népképviselői országgyűlés*, eds János Beér and Andor Csizmadia, Budapest, 1954, pp. 644–47, 621–32.

23 *KLÖM*, XIII, p. 842.

24 *KLÖM*, XV, pp. 46–49; Orosz, 'Jobbágyfelszabadítás', pp. 107–09.

Lajos Kossuth and the Conversion of the Constitution

László Péter

The proposition that the world changed in 1848 may be questioned elsewhere — but not in Hungary. Quite rightly so. The creation of the first Hungarian responsible ministry, the passing of the April Laws, the National Assembly and, above all, the War of Independence were the formative events in the birth of modern Hungary. 1848 has become emblematic of national identity. The revolution (always in the singular rather than the plural) is credited with the creation of Hungarian civil society out of social groups that were both legally and culturally diverse. Furthermore, the revolution became a focus of national aspirations to attain independence. The revolution also generated conflicts and civil war within the kingdom between the Hungarian and the rival Slav and Romanian movements and these conflicts, too, became a legacy of 1848.

The Hungarian constitution, in the widest sense of the term, was undoubtedly transformed in 1848. The change can be looked at from a variety of perspectives. The ancient constitution offers one vantage point and so does Marxist social theory or ‘modernization’. Yet what I dare call the conversion of the constitution offers a more adequate perspective on the subject than any alternative. Why do I believe that?

The ancient constitution consisted of the mutually recognized rights and obligations of two actors: the crown and the nobility organized in the counties, and the diet of the *ország*. Their constitution went through conflicts and accommodations by *tractatus*, agreements, in 1608, 1681, 1711, 1790 and 1848, leading to the Settlement of 1867.¹ A historical

¹ There is more than a grain of truth in C. A. Macartney’s assessment of the 1867 Settlement: ‘there was nothing essentially new in the Dualist System. It simply adapted to parliamentary conditions relationships which went back far in the history of the Habsburg Monarchy. It was not in 1867 that Hungary first achieved legal recognition of her independence of the Habsburgs’ other territories, except in respect of defence and foreign affairs. This had been assured her by many solemn

analysis based on the vocabulary of the customary constitution like privilege, *gravamina*, *postulata*, *ditalis tractatus*, reserved rights, fundamental laws and so on, sheds much light on the process. But explanations based largely on such terms would get bogged down in continuities whereas it was the discontinuities that lent character to 1848.

Marxism provides a vantage point that places all the emphasis on discontinuities: the revolution replaced 'feudalism' with 'capitalism', abolishing serfdom and introducing 'bourgeois parliamentarism' in place of 'feudal absolutism'. For me these are large claims. The vocabulary of Marxist metaphysics does not penetrate the subject of the constitution and it is not much use even for understanding social change. How can it be, for instance, that in the new 414-member House fewer than ten non-nobles faced the landed gentry and the aristocrats who together made up a robust 74 per cent of the membership? What is commonly regarded by historians as a *polgári forradalom*, 'bourgeois revolution', created a one-class parliament dominated by the landed gentry, the *bene possessionati*. In 1861, the preponderance of the aristocracy and the landed gentry in the House rose to 77.3 per cent with the nobility as a whole securing 80 per cent of the seats. In the House that passed the 1867 Settlement the proportion of the land-owning nobility rose to almost 79 per cent. That is to say their proportion in the House from 1848 to 1867 actually rose.² Where was the bourgeoisie?

Modernization theories (Marxist metaphysics in sheepish form) are even less helpful in the understanding of social or constitutional change. Ministerial responsibility, the concentration camp and the doctrine of mutually assured destruction are all 'modern'. What do they have in common? And what on earth do the very different societies that are lumped together as 'traditional' have in common beyond the trivial point that we would not find Esso gas stations in any of them?

promises, including those made by Charles VI or III in connection with the Pragmatic Sanction and Leopold II's laws of 1790–91. It was also a fact that when the Hungarian constitution had been annulled, as by Leopold I, or ignored, as by Joseph II, Hungary had fought back and had recovered it. Her 'April Laws' of 1848, which formed the Hungarians' *point de départ* in the later negotiations, had been questionable in their treatment of the 'common subjects', but not in asserting her complete internal independence nor, indeed, were they so questioned in Vienna itself, when first enacted'. 'The Compromise of 1867', in *Studies in Diplomatic History*, eds. R. Hatton and M. S. Anderson, 1970, London, p. 299.

2 See Ernő Lakatos, *A magyar politikai vezetőréteg 1848–1918*, Budapest, 1942, pp. 29–34, 49–50, László Péter, 'Die Verfassungsentwicklung in Ungarn', in *Die Habsburgermonarchie 1848–1918*, eds. Helmut Rumpler and Peter Urbanitsch, Vienna, 2000, VII. p. 344 (hereafter 'Verfassungsentw.').

The term 'conversion of the constitution' covers a cluster of interrelated theses and seems to me a more adequate analytical tool to unpack and elaborate the constitutional transformation of 1848 and after than any offered by other schemes because it penetrates the core of the subject. After 1830 liberal nationalism became the driving force of Hungarian politics. The reformers, Széchenyi, Wesselényi, Kölçsey, Deák, Kossuth, Eötvös wanted to create a Hungarian civil society through legislation. Indeed, the liberal nationalists understood by 'civil society' (*polgári társadalom*) a community based on statute laws which applied equally to everybody rather than, as Marxists would have us believe, the capitalist system. What I refer to as conversion here is the contemporary *alkotmányos kifejlés* or *kifejtés*, *Entwicklung*, and for the liberal nationalists primarily meant the replacement of the constitution, based on rights, by another system based on statute laws. Or to put it less formally, the system of privileges was to be replaced by a social order based on legal equality. Also, some of the monarch's reserved rights were to be shared with the nation so that representative government could be introduced without the nobility losing its ascendancy in Hungarian society. The central aim of liberal nationalist nobles was, in close connection with the creation of a Hungarian civil society, the establishment of an autonomous Hungarian state within the Habsburg Monarchy. Looking at it from this perspective, conversion meant the transition from the customary constitution based on the bipolarity of the *ország* and the crown to the all-embracing legal system, called the State, created by statute law. Also, conversion had a territorial aspect: the medieval precept of the inalienability of the crown was converted into the integrity of the *ország* (a point to which I return below). Finally, the conversion affected the distribution of social power: it inaugurated a shift within the country's landowning elite. Hitherto the aristocracy was in a dominant position; from 1848 onwards the gentry was in the saddle.³ All in all, and with the benefit of hindsight, the conversion from the system of rights to that of statute laws was a change not fully carried through in nineteenth century Hungary.

The reformers, in general, were committed to the West European idea of civil society, *polgári társaság*, in which every individual possessed the same rights and duties. Civil society was a political order founded on a unified legal system in which statute laws, which applied equally to the nobles, the clergy, the bourgeois and the serfs, replaced the segmentary,

³ László Péter, 'The Aristocracy, the Gentry and Their Parliamentary Tradition in Nineteenth-Century Hungary', *The Slavonic and East European Review*, 70, January 1992, pp. 77–110.

'barbaric', 'feudal' society based on serfdom, the hierarchy of privileges, legal inequalities, local and provincial customary rights. Equality under the law, personal security, freedom and the right to own property became the new social ideal. The methods used to achieve this were the policies of *érdekegyesítés*, interest-amalgamation, and of *jogkiterjesztés*, the extension of rights (the latter turned out to be a confused hybrid).

All this sounds like a liberal social reform package — which it was not. The reform served an end: civil society was to be national. As elsewhere in Central Europe and beyond, liberalism and nationalism, although philosophically incompatible, appeared politically combined: both served the goal of social integration. Through legislation the reformers planned to create a single Hungarian community of citizens out of legally and culturally diverse social groups. The *ország* transformed and converted into the Hungarian nation, demanded an autonomous position in the Empire. This programme of nation building was successful before 1848. In early nineteenth century Hungary, less than forty per cent of the population was Hungarian speaking. However, the national-liberal program had a wide appeal in the German-speaking towns and particularly among smaller ethnic groups like the Jews, Armenians, Zipser-Saxons, Bunjevici and others. But in spite of rapid voluntary magyarization, the national-liberal program was also fraught with conflict. It put Hungarian politics on a collision course with Vienna. Magyarization left unaffected the large blocks of Slavonic groups on the periphery which had their own national movements. The diet, overriding strong Croat objections, put through language laws which replaced Latin with Hungarian as the official language of the counties, the dicasteria, the diet and the courts. In 1836 Hungarian became the official language of statute law. From that year, the laws also provided for the extension of the use of the Hungarian language among the non-Hungarian population, enactments that were as ineffective and unenforceable as they were capable of generating conflicts with the non-Hungarian intelligentsia, which they undoubtedly did. But national conflict was probably unavoidable in multilingual Hungary. What makes the nineteenth century transformation of the country's constitution so peculiar is that an ever-growing proportion of a hidebound provincial gentry was inclined to accept the abolition of serfdom and the nobility's prerogatives, including the tax privilege, the principle of equality before the law and even the introduction of political franchise. The county gentry accepted the social reforms to the extent that they were subordinated to the national program whose implementation would meet their social aspirations.⁴

4 Péter, 'Verfassungsentw.', pp. 262–65.

The objective of the national movement was no less than the building of a unitary Hungarian state, under gentry leadership, with representative institutions covering the whole territory of the kingdom and even beyond. Croatia-Slavonia, the *Militärgrenze*, Transylvania with the Partium and also Dalmatia and Galicia were to be merged with Hungary proper, the *ország*. The programme to absorb into Hungary both Transylvania and Croatia — two separate *regna* for centuries — was based on a claim to pre-existing state-right. From the king's obligation, enshrined in the coronation diploma, to reconquer and reincorporate all lost territories in the kingdom and its adjoined parts, a single *regnum*, Hungary, derived the claim to 'repossess' the other *regna*. Upon conversion, the inalienability of the crown, appeared as the 'integrity' of the *ország*, and the merger of Transylvania with Hungary as 'reunion'.⁵ The last objective appeared politically viable. Transylvania's Romanians objected to Union, but they lacked political rights. Two out of Transylvania's 'Three Nations' (estates), the county nobility and the Szekels, both Hungarian-speaking, were potential supporters of Union. Only the third 'nation', the Saxon *universitas*, opposed it.

By contrast, in Croatia only segments of the nobility, the magnates, the yeomanry of Turopolje and, for a while, County Zagreb were 'magyarones'. The bulk of the educated nobility and *honoratores* supported the Croat national (Illyrian) party under the spirited leadership of the radical Croat intellectual Ljudevit Gaj. The Sabor rejected the Hungarian claims: Croatia, for eight hundred years a separate *regnum* under the Hungarian crown, had never been a part of the *ország*. The Croat nationalists argued that the terms found in the *decreta*, *partes subiectae* and *adnexae*, in fact meant *socia regna*. As Hungary and Croatia were 'associated Lands', the Hungarian diet did not have the right to legislate for Croatia except on the basis of mutual consent and interest. Indeed, in the past, and even in 1790, the diet had not enforced the majority principle. That was why the Croat Sabor (not the three Croat counties directly) sent deputies to the diet without putting Croatia's separate position in jeopardy. By the 1840s, however, the Hungarian county deputies at the diet were quite prepared to 'majorize'

⁵ See the usage of 'crown' and *ország* in Ferenc Eckhart, *A szentkorona-eszme története*, Budapest, 1941, pp. 268–96.

minorities, particularly on language issues.⁶ But the crucial question underlying the language issue was the status of Croatia itself.⁷

Lajos Kossuth came from a rather humble background in the landless nobility; his father was a solicitor. He started as a brilliant journalist in the 1830s, before playing a major role in the conversion of the constitution. He had a rapid rise in Hungarian politics. The journalist became leader of the Opposition between 1841 and 1847. The key to his success was the ability to be ahead of others on both fronts: social reform as well as national aspirations.⁸ A strong case could be made that the conversion of the constitution carried out in 1848 was to a large extent based on Kossuth's policies.

Take serf-lord relations first. The Laws of 1840 introduced 'optional emancipation', i.e. permissive arrangements through which the peasant could redeem all servitudes against a one-off payment to the landlord. Kossuth argued in his *Pesti Hírlap* that the Law should be implemented whenever the peasant wanted it and could afford it. On taxation he argued that the nobility should start paying tax in the form of the local rates, to the *cassa domestica* acting as a bank to finance peasant emancipation. On economic policy Kossuth sought to introduce a protective tariff system against Austrian produce (Kossuth swallowed Friedrich List's nationalist political economy) in order to develop industry in Hungary. He argued that the towns should have proper representation at the diet on the understanding that they magyarize. As regards magyarization he distinguished the 'public sphere' from the 'private sphere'. Only the former should be Hungarian but there was a rider: the definition of 'public' was too wide

6 Mihály Horváth described the diet's behaviour as 'idiotic' (*eszélytelen*), *Huszonöt év Magyarország történetéből 1823–1848*, 3 vols., Budapest, 1868 (hereafter *Huszonöt év*) II, pp. 396–98, 406–23, esp. 406 (the enforcement of the 'resolution' by one chamber of the diet was, as the Personalis pointed out, in conflict with lawful custom).

7 The largely defensive Croat constitutional position was contractualist and, like the Hungarian claims, based on historical rights: Coloman, king of Hungary, was elected to the throne by the Croat nobles on the basis of *pacta conventa* in 1102 AD (an obvious anachronism). The Croat territorial claim extended to Slavonia and Dalmatia, with which it constituted the 'Triune Kingdom'. On the Croat diet, see Mirjana Gross 'Der kroatische Sabor (Landtag)' in *Die Habsburgermonarchie 1848–1918*, eds Helmut Rumpler and Peter Urbanitsch, Vienna, 2000, VII/2, pp. 2283f; Gyula Miskolczy, *A horvát kérdés története és irományai*, 2 vols. 1927–28, Budapest, I, pp. 44, 61, 67, etc. (with heavy Hungarian gloss).

8 On the rise of Kossuth in Hungarian politics see Domokos Kosáry, *Kossuth Lajos a reformkorban*, 1946, Budapest, esp. pp. 326f; Istvan Deak, *The Lawful Revolution*, New York, 1973 (hereafter *Lawful Revolution*), pp. 52f.

(e.g. it included the ‘new’ economy, railways, banking and so on).⁹ Kossuth wanted to maintain the county system (against central government — even against responsible government) but the county had to be democratized even though gentry leadership in it was to be preserved. Over the introduction of representative government Kossuth came into conflict with Eötvös and the Centralists whom Kossuth initially opposed. He subsequently changed his mind and the conflict was patched up in 1847. The independent and responsible ministry became a desirable aim though not yet a specific programme in the oppositional declaration drafted by Kossuth and Deák.

Kossuth’s rhetoric in setting up a Hungarian State constructed from the three *regna* of the Hungarian crown was more sweeping than the rhetoric of other politicians. From December 1847 onwards, Kossuth, by then as leader of the Opposition in the diet, repeatedly questioned the very existence of Croatia as a Land.¹⁰ He insisted that under the Hungarian Holy Crown a single nation existed: the Hungarian, and there had to be therefore a single legislature. His speeches, made shortly before the revolution, created an atmosphere which later made any cooperation between Croat and Hungarian politicians improbable.

In the run-up to the revolution Kossuth was not at all radical on the imperial connection. Instead of any shift to demanding ‘personal union’ with the rest of the Empire (which in the summer of 1848 was to become his chief concern), it was ‘common interests’ and ‘common relations’ between Hungary and the other Lands of the Monarchy that became part of his political rhetoric. This was because Kossuth, and indeed the other Hungarian liberals, now assumed that constitutionalism would be (sooner or later) introduced in all parts of the Monarchy and when that happened *tractatus* with the monarch would have to be complemented by contacts with the other Lands. The oppositional declaration had already alluded to this point which then Kossuth made in his speech at the Circular Session

9 See Domokos Kosáry, ‘A Pesti Hírlap nacionalizmusa 1841–1844’, *Századok*, 77, 1943, esp. p. 382.

10 Kossuth flatly denied that Croatia existed. He argued on 11 December 1847, and also on 7 and 8 January 1848, that the three ‘Croat’ counties in fact constituted Slavonia while Croatia was partly still under Turkish rule and partly governed as Militärgrenze, *Kossuth Lajos összes munkái*, Budapest, 1951 (hereafter *KLÖM*), XI, pp. 382–83, 434–35, 438–40. In late March 1848, that is after Croatia had refused to have any contact with the Batthyány government, Kossuth shifted his position without any explanation and once more recognized Croat nationality and a Croat constitution: speech on 28 March 1848, *ibid.*, pp. 696–97. As Mihály Horváth observed, by then it was too late; *Huszonöt év*, III, pp. 301–03.

on 22 November 1847 and in his draft Address. The Lower House now declared that ‘the fullest expansion of the Hungarian constitution’ and ‘common status relationships’ could, if Law X of 1790 was respected, coexist and the seemingly divergent interests could be settled ‘in the management of the common imperial state connections’ on the basis of parity.¹¹ We may note that these were the terms and concepts that reemerged in the 1860s — facts ignored by historians who censure Deák for abandoning Hungary’s rights in 1867. Notably, however, while Kossuth in 1847 envisaged *tractatus* on the ‘common relations’ with the Austrian liberals as well as the Court, Deák in the 1860s entered into *tractatus* solely with the monarch.

Even after the collapse of the July Monarchy in Paris in February, the Kossuth-led diet remained moderate in demanding the expansion of the constitution through the introduction of ‘national government’ but also calling for a settlement (*kiegyenliteni*) of the common interests with the other Lands as well as recognizing ‘our legal relations with the empire as a whole’.¹² The Hungarian position became more radical after the collapse of the Metternich system. Now the liberal leaders wanted to secure greater autonomy for Hungary than had been envisaged by Kossuth and others even a few weeks earlier.

However, well before the collapse of the Metternich system, Kossuth, with an eye to the main chance, had on 3 March dragged the diet away from the politics of small measures. His Address speech had a single theme: the constitution’s *kifejtés* (*Entwicklung*), the establishment of national government, a system where the executive power would be responsible to a parliament elected by the nation.¹³ The draft Address clearly stated that ‘we regard the conversion of the dicasterial (‘*collegiális*’) governmental system to a Hungarian responsible ministry the essential requirement and guarantee of all the other reforms’. The draft then asked the king to send to the diet members of the Gubernium who enjoyed his confidence and who would be responsible (to the diet) for the implementation of the reforms. The Lower House passed the Address on the same day, the Upper House only on 14 March, the day after Metternich fell. By then the situation had changed. The Lower

11 *KLÖM*, XI., pp. 316f and 327.

12 ‘az összes birodalom iránti törvényes viszonyaink’, *KLÖM*, XI, p. 625n c.

13 *KLÖM*, XI, pp. 619–28 esp. 626. Kossuth’s speech was not about ‘the tasks of the diet’, as generally claimed; its sole subject was the transformation of the system of government. Even the Address was largely about reform of the system of government.

House, under Kossuth's spell, reported to the counties that it expected 'the strengthening, the expansion and the transformation of the constitution'.¹⁴ Indeed, the first attempt to transform the monarch and the *ország*'s rights into a liberal legal order, the April Laws, or rather what was read into them in Pest after their enactment, was a more sweeping conversion of the constitution than subsequent attempts and, although it failed conspicuously, it set a benchmark for Hungarian politics that outlasted even the Monarchy. The events in Europe, Kossuth reported to County Pest, 'had shaken to its foundations the edifice of the ancient constitution', which had proven to be too constricting. 'Only two pillars remained standing intact and strong enough to bear a (new) capacious structure, the king and the free legislature'¹⁵ (a dangerously unstable situation, one would have thought). By free legislature Kossuth meant the Lower House, which was about to become a House of Representatives, rather than the diet as a whole. For the collapse of the Metternich system crushed the authority of the Upper House and deflated even that of the counties. Neither institution ever recovered its former place in the constitution. On 14 March the Lower House declared that even before its reconstruction it could perform its duties only as 'the representative of the whole nation rather than that of a separate class'.¹⁶ The claim of the Lower House to act as a constituent assembly, a declaration of gentry ascendancy over the aristocracy, was realized in the 31 laws of the 1848 *decretem*.

The April Laws broke the back of the old social order based on hereditary right and laid the foundation of the new Hungary. *Ország* rights were converted into the rights of the Hungarian nation, to which at least those who were given the franchise could claim to belong. In the process the rules of *dietalis tractatus* were repeatedly broken. The foundations, improvised, incomplete, and in part temporary, also contained durable rules, notwithstanding the speed with which the whole *corpus* was pushed through. In the preamble of the April Laws the estates, defining the aims of the *decretem* listed in the first place the intention to 'unite the interests, under the Law, of the whole Hungarian people'.¹⁷ Yet the Law did not declare the principle of legal equality. Nor was nobility annulled as a legal status. All in all, legal equality, the principle that all individuals possess the same rights and duties, and personal freedom inspired the

14 15 March, *ibid.*, p. 659.

15 Móric Szentkirályi and Lajos Kossuth's report, 16 April 1848, *KLÖM*, XI, p. 740.

16 *Ibid.*, p. 659.

17 1836–1868. évi törvénycikkek (Márkus edn.) Budapest, 1896, p. 217.

legislator in 1848; they were elements of the reform program rather than rights established by statute law.

The emancipation of over nine million peasants in Hungary and in Croatia from their servile condition was the most significant, albeit incomplete, step towards civil society taken in 1848.¹⁸ Law XI abolished the patrimonial authority of the landlord over the serf. Laws IX and XIII rendered void urbarial obligations and the tithe. The private landlord was to be paid compensation out of public funds to be determined by the new parliament; the tithe went without compensation.

Law III established 'independent and responsible' government. While the authority of the Hungarian ministry may not have been properly defined, the April Laws nevertheless created a coherent system of government in so far as this was politically feasible in the spring of 1848. The chief reason why the April Laws did not last lay not the Law itself, incomplete and in places ambiguous though it might have been, but in the fact that the partners, *after* its enactment, embarked on policies governed by irreconcilable aims. Kossuth and Prime Minister Batthyány read 'personal union' into the April Laws. The so-called 'personal union', as understood by Kossuth, was a figleaf for the claim to a separate Hungarian State. The Austrian response was the claim to the existence of a *Gesamtstaat*, read into the Pragmatic Sanction, which then justified the demand for the revision of the April Laws.¹⁹ The new rival conceptions of the State destroyed the constitutional settlement. No constitutional reform should be expected to solve intractable political conflicts.

After Radetzky's victory in Italy the Austrian Government and the Court felt secure enough to embark on a policy of 'restoring the supreme government' in the Monarchy and, as far as Hungary was concerned, they were prepared to assert their constitutional claims by armed force. In the crisis in September the Batthyány government disintegrated; Kossuth became a parliamentary dictator. It was the rival conceptions of *state* that destroyed the monarchic union of Lands on which the Habsburg dynasty

18 Over half of the serfs possessed urbarial land, but most of them had at least a household plot. The Law lifted obligations only on urbarial land. János Varga, *A jobbágyszabadság kivívása 1848-ban* Budapest, 1971, pp. 167, 339–40. The Transylvanian diet likewise abolished urbarial obligations and the state was to compensate the landlord; Laws IV, V and VI 1848 of Transylvania.

19 The *Denkschrift* prepared by Staatsrat Pipitz for Ferdinand on 27 August read 'Einheit in der obersten Staatsleitung' into the Pragmatic Sanction, see László Péter, 'Old Hats and Closet Revisionists: Reflections on Domokos Kosáry's Latest Work on the 1848 Hungarian Revolution.' *The Slavonic and East European Review*, 80, 2002, pp. 296–319, (309, n 48).

had founded its empire. The intractable constitutional conflict turned into war. After fighting began between the Imperial and the Hungarian revolutionary armies, Ferdinand abdicated on 2 December. His successor Franz Joseph soon cleared away the constitutional rubble left over from 1848 as well as the precepts of Hungary's ancient constitution.

Franz Joseph's Manifesto and the announcement of the Imperial Constitution by *octroi*²⁰ of 7 March 1849, rather than after *tractatus* of any sort, opened a new chapter in Hungary's relationship with the empire. The new monarch, by alluding to his 2 December Manifesto, declared that the guarantee of the future lay 'in der Wiedergeburt eines einheitlichen Österreich' — a program based on the presumptive claim that the Habsburg Monarchy constituted a single State.²¹ In contrast to the Pillersdorf Constitution the new constitution applied to all *Kronländer* of the Austrian empire, including Italy and Hungary. Centralization was the cornerstone of the constitution. There was to be common citizenship, a single legal system and central parliament (in addition to a local diet for each crown Land). The constitution broke up the kingdom of Hungary. It severed the connections between Croatia-Slavonia, Transylvania and Hungary proper and it carved out the Serbian Vojvodina as a separate territory. Each became, like Hungary, a separate *Kronland*. Paragraph 71 emasculated the April Laws, without formally rescinding them, and ended Hungary's special position in the empire.

Die Verfassung des Königreiches Ungarn wird insoweit aufrecht erhalten, dass die Bestimmungen, welche mit dieser Reichsverfassung nicht im Einklange stehen, ausser Wirksamkeit treten.²²

Although this constitution was not fully implemented anywhere in the empire before its cancellation in 1851 (and for Hungary it largely remained a blueprint), its announcement affected the course of Hungarian politics. It enabled Kossuth and the national radicals on 14 April 1849 to put through the rump parliament at Debrecen, where it had moved because of the advancing imperial army, a resolution that Hungary was an independent European State.²³ This move was a direct response to the

20 'aus freier Bewegung und eigener kaiserlicher Macht': Edmund Bernatzik, *Die österreichischen Verfassungsgesetze*, Vienna, 1911, p. 148.

21 Ibid. The term 'Gesammt-Monarchie' had already appeared on 2 December when the monarch hoped that his policy would lead to the 'Verjüngung der Gesammt-Monarchie'. The context in all these cases is prescriptive.

22 Paragraphs 1, 72–74, ibid., pp. 150, 159–60. Paragraph 75 restored the position of the Grenze.

23 *KLÖM*, XIV, pp. 873–87.

imperial announcement of 7 March.²⁴ Undoubtedly there were other factors. Görgei and the other generals' brilliant spring campaign leading to the recapture of the capital boosted morale. Also, Kossuth, quite unrealistically, hoped that an 'independent' Hungary would attract foreign support. Further, by forcing parliament to burn its boats, Kossuth successfully wiped the floor with the 'peace party'.²⁵ Based on the House's resolution of 14 April, 'The Hungarian Nation's Declaration of Independence' was enacted on 19 April.²⁶ It began with a general statement:

We, the National Assembly legally representing the Hungarian State,²⁷ in this solemn declaration — whereby we restore Hungary to its inalienable natural rights together with all the parts and territories belonging thereto, installing it amongst the ranks of the autonomous, independent states of Europe and declaring the perfidious House of Habsburg-Lorraine dethroned before God and the world — recognize it as our moral duty to announce in public the reasons for this our decision, so that it may be known throughout the civilized world ...

The declaration went into history, listed the nation's grievances and the violations of Hungary's independence enshrined in Article X of 1790. It gave a blow by blow account of the House's 'perfidious acts' in 1848 (not sparing even Palatine István), ending with the announcements of 7 March 1849. The four enacting clauses at the end of the document declared Hungary to be an independent European state whose territorial integrity was inviolable; 'deposed, debarred and banished' the Habsburg House in the name of the nation; declared peace with all neighbours; and left the determination of the form of the State to the following parliament and appointed 'by unanimous acclamation' Lajos Kossuth as Governor-president.²⁸

The constitutional import of the Independence Declaration went beyond the deposition of the dynasty. For the first time the claim to statehood, based on historic right, was unambiguously expressed in an authoritative document. Hungary, not just a Land, possessed all the attributes, external as well as internal, of an independent European state. The new term *álladalom*, soon to be shortened to *állam* in political discourse,

24 The Declaration itself refers to the Manifesto of 4 March, *ibid.*, p. 908.

25 Zsigmond Kemény and others doubted if the majority of the rump parliament would have passed the resolution after any debate (which they did not have), Gusztáv Beksics, *Kemény Zsigmond, a forradalom s a kiegyezés*, Budapest, 1883, pp. 114–21.

26 *KLÖM*, XIV, pp. 894–912.

27 'magyar álladalom', the new term, occurs three times in the text.

28 'Kormányzó elnök': *ibid.*, p. 911.

expressed the claim to Hungary's new constitutional status.²⁹ Kossuth was closely identified with the new view,³⁰ and his influence on the modern Hungarian national outlook has been more enduring than that of any other politician.

The *Gesamt-Monarchie* and the *magyar álladalom* were political programmes based on rival claims to statehood. Both trampled on centuries-old traditions although they were dressed up in historic guise. The state in the eighteenth century meant the institutions based on monarchic rights; the *ország*-rights existed separately. Neither the court nor the *ország* claimed to possess a unitary, legally unrestricted, all-embracing system of public law. Nonetheless, this was the claim that the court and Hungary both clearly asserted during the revolutions. Neither had any chance of being realized.³¹ In relation to the *Gesammt-Monarchie* it took a decade to find this out. The same truth about the *magyar álladalom* became obvious by 1849 when Hungary's leaders tried to attain the impossible. All the facts were against them, yet facts hardly ever shape history — ideas do. It is ideas not facts, that mould men's behaviour.

Kossuth, *a nagy száműzött*, the 'great exile' in Turin after 1867, mourned the eclipse of the 'Hungarian State' which he, its last representative, tried to 'restore' in 1848. Was he truly its *last* representative, rather than its creator? Did the engineer of the constitutional conversion from the *ország* to the state really believe this? Leaders sometimes harbour misconceptions about their own contribution.

29 On the etymology of 'status', 'álladalom' and 'állam', see Ferencz Schedel [Toldy], *Törvénytudományi műszótár*, Pest, 1847, 2nd ed., p. 433; Loránd Benkő (chief ed.) *A magyar nyelv történeti-etimológiai szótára*, Budapest, 1967, I, p. 137.

30 Notably, not the liberal Centralists, who mostly went to ground after the September crisis, but the national radical Kossuth, who had earlier sneered at 'State theories' when they threatened county autonomy, became most closely identified with the concept of the Hungarian State.

31 Zsigmond Kemény clearly understood this in 1851. In his *Még egy szó a forradalom után* he denounced the two state theories as pedantic, arrogant and impractical: Baron Zsigmond Kemény, *Forradalom után*, Budapest, 1908, p. 397.

Kossuth's Nationality Policy, 1847–1853

András Gergely

1. Before the Revolution

During the Reform era, Kossuth made few comments on the nationality question in Hungary. Like many other liberal representatives of the Hungarian nobility, Kossuth considered the question to be of only secondary importance. Liberal opinion of the time, although it realized that a problem existed, believed that by extending civil rights and by abolishing the privileges of the nobility, tensions between the national groups would abate. It is generally recognized that the national question did not receive much attention from Kossuth before 1848. As he himself later wrote in his memoirs, the freedom of the press had stood at the centre of his political efforts in the 1830s, and the abolition of serfdom in the 1840s. Neither of these priorities conflicted, however, with the interests of the nationalities; on the contrary, they harmonized with them.

Kossuth's views on the national question during the Reform era coincided with those of most liberals of the period and were predicated on the need to create a nation of citizens based on equality of rights. The extension of rights and the abolition of serfdom applied to every member of society irrespective of nationality. According to Kossuth, a civil society based on the principle of freedom would be created and this, in turn, would serve to diminish national conflicts. In the 'new' Hungary, every citizen would enjoy a fuller and freer life and this would make them more loyal to their country than to their linguistic relatives living across the border. As far as the national minorities were concerned, however, the introduction in 1844 of Hungarian as the official language in place of Latin hardly represented an improvement: instead of a 'dead' language they were now expected to learn a living language but one which was still not their own. Nevertheless, a multi-lingual administration and parliament was inconceivable at this time, even in a multi-lingual country. (In

contemporary Belgium, also a multi-lingual country, the language of public administration and of the law was French, while the Swiss constitution ceding the official use of three languages was enacted only in 1847.) In accordance with the Hungarians' own history, cultural traditions, social and demographic weight, the Hungarian language assumed the status of *primus inter pares* with respect to the languages of the other nationalities.

Contemporary Hungarians were also convinced that members of the national minorities would, in gratitude for the freedoms granted them, voluntarily and over time become Hungarians. And, if this was historically inevitable, the process could be accelerated and enhanced by schooling, the enforcement of bilingualism, and by specialist institutions (ranging from kindergartens to university bursaries). By this measure, the Hungarian language would be no longer *primus inter pares* but instead *primus et solus*.¹

Not all politicians accepted, however, that the nationalities should be forced to assimilate or to undergo 'magyarization'. Széchenyi himself, while accepting the inevitability of assimilation, repudiated its forceful implementation and the imposition of a 'dictatorship of language' (*nyelvi diktatúra*). Arguments for and against forcible assimilation were, however, often rooted in considerations of foreign policy. Politicians were afraid that the national minorities — and especially those of the Orthodox confession — would fall prey to and become instruments of pan-Slav agitation. They considered, moreover, that the demands made by the minorities were the consequence of the machinations of 'pan-Slav agitators', and that they were evidence of the political connection between the minorities and St Petersburg. Those, however, with a more sophisticated understanding of international politics, like Széchenyi himself, did not advocate rapid assimilation on account of its corrosive effect on relations with the neighbouring powers. Over the succeeding decades considerations of foreign policy, as well as of the internal development of Hungary, influenced nationality politics, and therefore the views of Kossuth himself.

The defining element in all this was the principle of national unification based on the extension of rights or, in the words of the time, the 'joining of interests' (*érdekegyesítés*), which would yield a common but also multi-lingual homeland. According to Kossuth's statement of 1847, 'We offer you [i.e. *the nationalities*] freedom of thought, jurisdiction,

¹ János Varga, *Helyét kereső Magyarország. Politikai eszmék és koncepciók az 1840-es évek elején*, Budapest, 1982.

legislation, together with the right to own land. We offer you citizenship under the law, the right to belong politically to a nationality, and indeed all those rights that this land provides for its citizens. And we wish for nothing more in return than mutual love and protection for this land, which hereby ceremoniously receives you as its children, and for the nationality [i.e. the Hungarian] which presents you with your coming of age.² In accordance with this, Kossuth formulated an instruction to the deputies of Pest county in 1847 that in respect of the nationalities everything should be done which was possible 'legally and in an indirect manner', and 'nothing that might irritate the minority-speaking nationalities or could be regarded as an infringement of their private lives'.³

The nationality conflicts before 1848 (except for Croatia which had its own special status) were related to three issues: the centralization of the administration; the introduction of Hungarian as the official language; and Hungarian-language education in schools. What were Kossuth's attitudes in respect of these three issues?

- Kossuth believed profoundly in centralization (at least, until 1848/49), and that Croatia, Transylvania and, of course, the southern Military Frontier should be governed from Buda. It should be noted, however, that when as early as 1842 he saw the debate with Croatia hardening, he recommended full sovereignty and had this voted for by the Pest county assembly.⁴
- The struggle to make Hungarian the official language was essentially decided without Kossuth and he had little part in the official introduction of Hungarian in 1844. Kossuth explained, 'We want neither the tyranny of a dead language nor a polyglot confusion of Babel in our public life'.⁵
- Kossuth was a restrained politician. During the course of 1847, when the issue of the language of education came to the forefront of debate in the diet, Kossuth spoke against the motion supported by the majority which proposed all instruction should be in the Hungarian language. Accordingly, the diet left it to the 'appropriate authorities'

2 *KLÖM*, XI, p. 128.

3 *KLÖM*, XI, p. 188.

4 György Szabad, 'Hungary's recognition of Croatia's self-determination in 1848 and its immediate antecedents', in (ed.) Béla Király, *East Central European Society and War in the Era of Revolutions 1775–1856*, New York, 1984, pp. 591–609.

5 György Szabad, *Kossuth Lajos ismert és ismeretlen megnyilatkozásai tükrében*, Budapest, 1977 (hereafter, *Kossuth Lajos*), p. 80.

(i.e. the municipalities and churches) to decide on the matter, since in many places neither teachers nor pupils spoke Hungarian. By this measure, Hungarian was understood not as the language of education but rather as a subject to be taught.⁶

In summary, therefore, we may conclude that before 1848 Kossuth was committed to 'spontaneous' assimilation. He supported policies which enhanced and accelerated this process, but his political pragmatism, moral principles and his conviction that assimilation was inevitable, dissuaded him from advocating extreme solutions. There is no evidence in any of his writings of prejudice or hostility towards the nationalities.

2. 1848–49

The spring of 1848 witnessed both the abolition of serfdom and the conversion of Hungarian society from a society of estates, resting on privilege, to a society based on citizenship. Equal legal rights and the franchise were granted without any discrimination in respect of nationality. It is important to underline this, because in a number of publications it is quite wrongly claimed that only Hungarian-speaking serfs were freed or that only Hungarian-speaking citizens received the right to vote, and so on.

No special law was passed in 1848 regarding the nationalities. In all the laws passed that year there were only two paragraphs that might have been thought to relate to the nationalities and to have given grounds for offence. One stated that deputies to the diet should have a knowledge of Hungarian (but here, at Kossuth's prompting, the text of the law was adjusted to 'insofar as he is capable of it, [the deputy's] language in the matter of law-making shall be Hungarian').⁷ Strictly speaking, this might be considered an infringement of the right of equal treatment, but — especially when viewed in the context of the Austrian Reichstag — it constituted a practical remedy for a difficult situation. It is indicative of the linguistic problems besetting the Reichstag that the only petition which sought to place relations between the nationalities on an equal footing came from the Slovaks and demanded that 'every deputy is obliged to know every language represented in the house'.⁸ One could scarcely find

6 *KLÖM*, XI, pp. 433, 438, 487.

7 'aki annak megfelelni képes, hogy a törvényhozás nyelve a magyar': Law V of 1848, para. 3.

8 György Spira, *A nemzetiségi kérdés a negyvennyolcas forradalom Magyarországán*, Budapest, 1980 (hereafter, Spira, *A nemzetiségi kérdés*), p. 163.

40 people in the whole empire who spoke all six languages, let alone 400! By contrast, in Hungary all politicians belonging to the nationalities spoke Hungarian. In this respect, the insistence on the Hungarian language as the vehicle of communication in the diet was not so much an 'insult' as a practical solution to a problem which was commonplace in Central Europe at this time. The second enactment affecting the nationalities was the requirement that the government of the counties be conducted in Hungarian.⁹ The counties, however, had long been using Hungarian in their administration and the act, therefore, simply confirmed the *status quo*.

With the benefit of hindsight it is possible to understand why the nationalities were not content with all that had been offered them. At the time, however, Hungarian politicians were astonished by the intransigence of the nationalities and by their rejection of the 'coming of age' which they had been offered. After all, had not the nationalities been granted rights in respect to freedom of speech, participation in elections, and so on? The truth was that the nationalities existed on a far lower cultural level than the Hungarians. In all of Transylvania there were, for example, no more than 5,000 literate Romanians. Legally the nationalities had the right to political participation, but in practice they were unable to do so on account of their social, economic and historical disadvantages. As a consequence, the nationalities repudiated the route of citizenship and sought, instead, the realization of demands which led in a quite different direction.

The two basic demands of the nationalities in 1848 were acknowledgement of their separate nationhood and the establishment of their own autonomous provinces. The first of these desiderata proved to be incomprehensible to the average Hungarian who believed that the concept of the 'political nation' transcended differences of language. How, moreover, could the nationalities constitute a nation and subject of the right to self-determination when the majority of Serbs and Romanians lived beyond the existing borders? In respect of the second demand, the notion of autonomous provinces was for Hungarian liberals an understandable but none the less unacceptable demand. As Kossuth repeatedly stated, the country was not simply multi-national but consisted of national groups which were dispersed across its entire territory. Internal national boundaries could not, therefore, be established and, if they were, they would yield only new minorities within their confines. Furthermore, the new national units so created might act as a 'Trojan Horse' and admit tsarist intrigues

9 Law XVI of 1848, para. 2.

aimed at the expansion of Russian influence. Foreign policy concerns blocked further consideration of the problem. The hopes of the spring of 1848 thus gave way to the exacerbation of the nationality conflict and led, within the space of a few months, to civil war.

Kossuth responded with a certain rigidity to the growing intensity of the situation and he openly expressed his disappointment over the nationalities' opposition to the policies emanating from Pest. He frequently asserted that their demands were fomented by pan-Slav agitators or the Viennese camarilla. Kossuth rejected claims to provincial autonomy and, responding to demands for equal political rights, pointed out that members of the nationalities already had these rights *qua* citizens. He agreed that the agitators should be arrested and, when open warfare broke out, he was not averse to issuing threats or advocating resettlement and the establishment of homogeneous national territories. In respect of concessions, he first proposed an amnesty for all those who laid down their arms. Later, he promised to consider, and indeed fulfilled, several demands relating to schooling and religion.

The change in Kossuth's views in respect of the nationalities and his embrace of a more conciliatory strategy has been analysed in a number of historical works, although no firm conclusions have yet been reached.¹⁰ Everybody agrees, however, that Kossuth, who found himself in a victorious position in the spring of 1848, was forced by events to make concessions. This was largely the consequence of the invasion of Hungary by Austrian forces and the Russian intervention in the summer of 1849 which brought about the prospect of final defeat.

No matter how correct Kossuth thought his position to be in respect of general principles — namely, that the official language should be Hungarian but that in his private life the citizen should be able to conduct his affairs in whatever language he chose — he was still obliged to make concrete decisions with regard to specific issues touching upon schooling, municipalities, the armed forces, the courts, and so on. As head of the apparatus of government, Kossuth had to confront the nitty-gritty of

¹⁰ I. Zoltán Tóth, 'Kossuth és a nemzetiségi kérdés 1848–49-ben', in *Emlékkönyv Kossuth Lajos születésének 150. évfordulójára*, vol 2, ed. I.Z. Tóth, Budapest, 1952; I. Zoltán Tóth, 'The nationality problem in Hungary in 1848–1849', *Acta Historica Academiae Scientiarum Hungariae*, 4, 1955, pp. 235–77; Ambrus Miskolczy, 'Roumanian-Hungarian attempts at reconciliation in the Spring of 1849 in Transylvania', *Acta Universitatis Budapestensis. Sectio Historica*, 21, 1981, pp. 61–81; Istvan Deak, 'István Széchenyi, Miklós Wesselényi, Lajos Kossuth and the problem of Romanian nationalism', *Austrian History Yearbook*, 12–13, 1976–77, pp. 69–77.

relations with the nationalities. In this capacity, he gradually made concessions and these were often controversial. In respect of the Orthodox communities, he suggested that national assemblies be held in their languages. Furthermore, he did not envision just individual schools for members of the nationalities but the establishment of a whole structure of minority-language education. Members of national minorities were already eligible for posts in the civil service, but Kossuth went further and converted this custom to a right, *expressis verbis*. He also put forward the idea that parties in a dispute should be allowed to choose the language of the proceedings in court.¹¹

In May 1849 Kossuth even abandoned his views on assimilation. He argued that in the interests of civilization, a member of a minority-language community should receive help from the state to foster his own language. In other words, the state should not only *tolerate* but *support* the development and use of minority languages.¹² In respect of ‘collective’ minority rights, however, the real Rubicon was crossed by Kossuth in July 1849. It is, in this respect, worth noting that in May 1848 Kossuth had rejected the idea completely. He had asserted then that collective rights were akin to having a lodging house in Pest where the residents were on the basis of their nationality subject to different authorities — a situation which he had described on this occasion as unthinkable.¹³ For all this, though, the *Projet de Pacification*, signed with the Romanian politician Bălcescu in July 1849, together with the subsequent Nationality Act, introduced the notion of collective minority rights. These enactments stated that the Hungarian language would only be used to the extent required to maintain Hungarian state rule. The act not only affirmed that the nationalities might use their own languages in schools, municipalities and churches but extended this right to include the county administration. Moreover, and most importantly, the act included a vital principle: that the application of the law should seek to foster ‘the free development of the nationality of all peoples dwelling within Hungary’.¹⁴ In this way, the law acknowledged the existence of collective rights, although, as it turned out, only on paper — for Hungary was defeated before its implementation was possible.

11 *KLÖM*, XII, pp. 137, 370, 66.

12 *KLÖM*, XII, p. 662.

13 *KLÖM*, XII, p. 370.

14 For the texts of the *Projet de Pacification* and the Nationalities Act, see Spira, *A nemzetiségi kérdés*, pp. 225–28.

How did this dramatic change come about and what was Kossuth's role in all this?

Kossuth was the child of his century and so a nationalist, but above all he was a politician. As far as Kossuth was concerned, the nation was not 'above everything'. Today we might say that he did not regard the nationalities conflict as a 'zero-sum' game. Instead, he understood the nationality question essentially in terms of practical politics and it was this that drove him on. The armed might of the nationalities (and especially of the Serbs), which was also bolstered by outside help, together with the social tensions which their insurrection aroused, not only made Kossuth feel threatened but also propelled him intellectually towards the *Projet* and the Nationality Act. In short, Kossuth reacted not as an ideologue but as a politician. It is certainly possible that he was familiar with the relevant section on nationalities included in the constitution of the German National Assembly, as amended in March 1849: *allen Volksstammen ist die Unverletzbarkeit ihrer Nationalität und Sprache gewahrleistet.*¹⁵ In other words, complete cultural autonomy was guaranteed for all the non-German nationalities of the new Germany. Nor should we exclude the influence on Kossuth's thinking of Bertalan Szemere and László Teleki. Nevertheless, even admitting these influences, we must ask why Kossuth should have been so susceptible to them. The truth is that he was impelled by political considerations and that he was, therefore, prepared to trim and to borrow in order to achieve the larger goal of Hungarian independence.

3. In Exile

Kossuth continued his labours after 1849, but he realized that a settlement with the nationalities was the precondition of any successful struggle to restore an independent Hungary.

In June 1850, Kossuth wrote to László Teleki who, as Kossuth's political envoy in Paris, retained considerable influence. Kossuth sketched out some basic laws that might, given better days, be presented to a constituent assembly in Hungary. The principles underpinning these laws had, nevertheless, been adumbrated before his exile. In his proposal, Kossuth brought together aspects of foreign and domestic policy. He argued that the grant of rights to the nationalities represented a *sine qua non* both of a

¹⁵ András Gergely, 'The Hungarian Nationalities Act of 1849', in (eds) Ignác Romsics and Béla K. Király, *Geopolitics in the Danube Region: Hungarian Reconciliation Efforts 1848–1998*, Budapest, 1998, pp. 41–58.

successful foreign policy and of a federation (later confederation) with the neighbouring states. He saw that the Serbs and Romanians could only be partners internationally if their rights as nationalities were guaranteed within Hungary. After 1850, the cornerstone of Kossuth's vision was a federal state, later to be described as a 'Danubian confederation'. We should note, however, that Kossuth allowed within this scheme that borders should be changed to permit the construction of nationally homogeneous blocks within an essentially federalist framework.¹⁶

Less than a year later, while in exile in the Turkish city of Kütahya, Kossuth came up with a new plan called 'Proposal for the Future Political Organization of Hungary with regard to the Solution of the Nationality Question'. Much of its content was familiar from 1849, in particular the use of minority-languages in schools, churches and the county administration. Nevertheless, in one critical respect, Kossuth took matters a step further. In 1848, Kossuth had accepted the collective identity and rights of the nationalities, but at this point he had not yet considered the socio-political aspects of this scheme. Two years later, in 1851, he hit on a solution which rested upon an analogy with religious identity. A church in a multi-religious land exercises its influence throughout the country as a whole and yet has no fixed territory of its own. In much the same fashion, citizens belonging to a national minority might establish their own national organizations, based on a voluntary principle, which would coalesce institutionally on the level of the counties, regions and ultimately as state-wide bodies. The national body would elect its own chairman, have its own coat-of-arms, be responsible for its own statutes, and supervise its own schools, but, like a church, would have no specific territory of its own. Hence, 'with the freedom of collegial self-government, those moral and social interests which are collectively called a "nation's" will be promoted'. In Kossuth's view, these organizations would have nothing to do with the state, and the state nothing to do with them.¹⁷ The national communities would thus themselves replicate the civil society which permitted their development rather than seek, as before, to acquire for themselves the trappings of statehood. This idea, later known as the 'personality principle', would subsequently surface around the turn of the

16 Szabad, *Kossuth Lajos*, pp. 173–74; György Spira, *Kossuth és alkotmányterve*, Debrecen, 1989.

17 'szóval társas önkormányzati teljes szabadsággal gondoskodandnak minden erkölcsi s társas érdekek előmozdításáról, miknek öszvegét "nemzetiségnak" [nemzetnek] nevezzük. Ezen egyesületnek nincs semmi köze az állammal, s az államnak sincs semmi köze ővele': Szabad, *Kossuth Lajos*, p. 175.

century in the writings of the Austro-Marxists and, to a certain degree also, in the 1993 Hungarian Law on Minorities. One should also note that according to the terms of the 1851 constitutional proposal, the citizen was entitled to speak in any of the languages of the country and the laws were to be published in all its languages.

Issues touching upon the territorial integrity of the country — not least the prospect of Croatia's secession — were taboo subjects for Kossuth. Already, however, in 1853 Kossuth agreed with a Romanian politician that, should Hungary win its independence, a plebiscite would be held to determine the status of Transylvania to establish whether it would form a union with Hungary based on the decision of 1848, or recover its former autonomy.¹⁸ In the following years, Kossuth refined and adjusted his ideas in line with the pace of international developments. In one of his unpublished proposals, Kossuth even suggested that, beside the plebiscite in Transylvania, a Serbian Vojvodina might be established in the southern counties inhabited by Serbs. (At this time, in 1851, a Serbian Vojvodina already existed by the grace of the Emperor of Austria, but the majority of its population was not Serbian and the territory did not enjoy self-government.)

It was Kossuth's position all along that so-called historic Hungary be preserved (although his proposal of 1862 for a 'Danubian confederation' can be seen as superseding this position, since he posited an independent Croatia and Transylvania, bound to Hungary through a common ruler). Kossuth tried to solve the nationality problem within the context of historic Hungary and he did not consider partition or dissolution a viable alternative. The ideas which he had held with regard to the nationalities in the Reform era underwent a dramatic change between 1847 and 1853. He remained, however, faithful to these for the next forty years and out of them developed new plans that were based on the principles of democracy, federalism and self-government. Even today, two centuries after his birth, he would have no need to be ashamed either of his ideas or of his determination in putting them forward.

18 Spira, *Kossuth és alkotmányterve*.

Lajos Kossuth, Domokos Kosáry and Hungarian Foreign Policy, 1848–49

Martyn Rady

Hungarian foreign policy is generally considered to have failed in 1848–49. Hungary did not receive international recognition as an independent state. Its overtures for diplomatic and military support were rejected by the Great Powers, and its envoys were snubbed. Although there was widespread public interest abroad in Hungary's struggle and fate, this concern was not translated into actual intervention on Hungary's behalf. While France gestured, Britain held firm to the conviction that the Habsburg Empire constituted, 'the most important element in the balance of European power', and that an independent Hungary represented a threat to Europe's 'liberties'.¹ Unrecognized and isolated, Hungary fought alone against the overwhelming might of Austria and Russia.²

There are two conventional explanations for the foreign-policy failure. The first, exemplified by Aladár Mód's *Four Hundred Years' Struggle for Independent Hungary* (1943, and many subsequent editions), depicts Hungary as the permanent victim of international power-politics. By this measure, an independent Hungary, because it variously threatened the European order, the forces of reaction, or even the worth of Austrian state-bonds, was bound not to receive international support.³ The second explanation points, by contrast, the finger of blame not at the Great Powers but at Lajos Kossuth himself. Within a few years of the defeat of

1 M. E. Chamberlain, *British Foreign Policy in the Age of Palmerston*, London, 1980, p. 125.

2 Independent Hungary was recognized only by Piedmont-Sardinia, Venice, Switzerland and the United States.

3 See thus also, Anonymous, 'Rákosi Mátyás és a magyar történettudomány', *Századok*, 86, 1952, pp. 1–23 (p. 10). The essay, which was also published as a *separatum* under the collective authorship of the Magyar Történelmi Társulat, was mainly composed by Erik Molnár. Molnár did a fine job in extracting all he could from Rákosi's 'A 48-as örökség' (published in *Építjük a nép országát*,

independent Hungary, the conviction arose that its government had been tardy in promoting the Hungarian cause abroad and that this accounted for the Great Powers' subsequent lack of interest in the Hungarian cause. The earliest explanation of this type was put forward in the joint-work of the radical Hungarian deputy, Dániel Irányi, and the French left-wing journalist, Charles-Louis Chassin, *Histoire politique de la révolution de Hongrie* (2 vols, Paris, 1859–60; see especially, vol 2, pp. 484–85). A few years later, the former bishop of Csanád and minister of public education in the Szemere government, Mihály Horváth, laid the blame for the failure of Hungarian foreign policy not on the 'government' but instead on Kossuth. According to Bishop Horváth, Kossuth never understood the merits of diplomacy and set too much store by military methods. As Kossuth himself observed, 'the best diplomacy is to smash the enemy'. Kossuth failed, according to Horváth, to take advice and insisted that France and Britain would soon intervene to halt Russia, even to the extent of sending a fleet to Sevastopol. Bishop Horváth's final verdict was damning: Kossuth's imagination in respect of the realities of international politics, 'mystified himself and others too'.⁴

Horváth's criticism of Kossuth was generally accepted by historians. Kossuth's understanding of foreign relations was thus variously described as 'self-deluding', and as 'swaggering, unrealistic and inconsequential'.⁵ In similar fashion, the most important English-language work published on Kossuth describes the overtures he made to the European powers in the summer of 1849, as a 'monument to his declining realism and perspicacity... Undoubtedly Kossuth, a provincial who had never been in a foreign country, knew little of European diplomacy; and what he knew was marred by his national pride and optimism'. Although the author

Budapest, 1949, pp. 105–14). For the Hungarian War of Independence as being internationally an 'issue of the wallet' (zsebbe vágó kérdés), see Sándor Márki and Gusztáv Beksics, *A modern Magyarország (1848–1896)*, (*A magyar nemzet története*, ed S. Szilágyi, 10), Budapest, 1898, p. 132.

4 Bishop Mihály Horváth, *Magyarország függetlenségi harczának története 1848 és 1849-ben*, 3 vols, Geneva, 1865, iii, pp. 80–82. See also Széchenyi's diary entry for 31 August, 1848: 'Kossuth will Kanonir-Boote — er hallucinirt fort': given in (ed) F. Erzsébet Kiss, *Az 1848–1849. évi minisztertanácsi jegyzőkönyvek*, Budapest, 1989, p. 132.

5 Révai Nagylexikona, 12, Budapest, 1915, p. 77. The account given by the anonymous contributor (Sándor Pethő?) also criticizes the timing of the Independence Declaration and Kossuth's treatment of Görgei. The second quotation summarizes the outlook of 'bourgeois historiography' and is taken from Eszter Waldapfel, *A független magyar külpolitika*, Budapest, 1962, p. 337.

acknowledges that a ‘more cosmopolitan statesman might not have achieved more’, his estimation of Kossuth puts him squarely in the Horváth tradition.⁶

The first determined attempt to rescue Kossuth’s reputation was made by Eszter Waldapfel in the early 1960s. Waldapfel’s exhaustive researches in Hungarian and foreign archives (most notably the Czartoryski Museum in Cracow) revealed a far greater, and earlier, activity on Kossuth’s part in respect of international relations than had previously been presumed. Waldapfel discussed at length Hungary’s diplomatic overtures to the Frankfurt parliament and the activities of László Teleki, the Hungarian envoy, in Paris. Additionally, she drew attention to the close links between foreign policy and the nationalities conflict within Hungary itself and the interrelationship of the two. Waldapfel’s downfall was, however, her attempt to demonstrate that Kossuth’s policy was consistent in that Kossuth always sought to align the Hungarian struggle with the most ‘progressive forces’ in Europe.⁷ Given that these forces were by the autumn of 1848 in full-scale retreat, Waldapfel’s account only added weight to those who argued that Kossuth’s foreign policy was both misguided and unrealistic.

It is easy to scoff, as historians often do, at Waldapfel’s work. Her account is, however (and as Aladár Urbán’s otherwise harsh review acknowledged), based on a thorough and easy familiarity with the sources and is supported by an extensive critical apparatus.⁸ What is also striking about Waldapfel’s contribution is that much of its periodization and many of its emphases should be followed in what is now the leading work on Hungarian foreign policy in 1848–49.⁹ As we might expect, Domokos Kosáry’s *Hungary and International Politics in 1848–49* is cleverer and more nuanced. Kosáry is, after all, the doyen of Hungarian historians who has (among much else) spent a lifetime with the nineteenth century and has behind him a string of works which are both seminal and provocative. In a number of respects, Kosáry broadly adheres to Waldapfel’s account, but he makes some necessary and important modifications. Just as Waldapfel sought to put Kossuth at the centre of the making of foreign policy in the spring and summer of 1848 (here, Waldapfel was reacting

⁶ Istvan Deak, *The Lawful Revolution: Louis Kossuth and the Hungarians*, New York, 1979, pp. 293, 300.

⁷ Waldapfel, *A független magyar külpolitika*, pp. 337–38.

⁸ Századok, 99, 1965, pp. 1296–1301.

⁹ Domokos Kosáry, *Magyarország és a nemzetközi politika 1848–1849-ben*, Budapest, 1999. An English-language edition, translated by Tim Wilkinson, is currently underway.

against the earlier, ‘collective ministry’ approach favoured by István Hajnal),¹⁰ so Kosáry indicates Kossuth’s critical role in influencing policy towards the German confederation and Piedmont-Sardinia. Kosáry sees the events of the summer of 1848 as accomplishing a shift in the pace of Hungarian diplomacy, but here he modifies Waldapfel who, while recognizing the change of tempo, located its cause exclusively in the ‘September crisis’. Again, Kosáry acknowledges the role of Teleki and the importance of his links with Czartoryski but, whereas Waldapfel was generally ambivalent in respect of Teleki’s achievements, Kosáry indicates his undoubted successes in promoting the Hungarian cause abroad. Nevertheless, the very fact that Kosáry devotes so much space to Teleki in France and to Pulcszky’s activities in England is itself a comment on his debt to Waldapfel’s own painstaking research. By contrast, in the most important book on Hungarian foreign policy published between Waldapfel and Kosáry, the diplomacy of Teleki and Pulcszky is accorded only summary treatment.¹¹ Similarly, Kosáry follows Waldapfel (and Hajnal) in establishing the close link between Hungarian foreign policy and the nationalities conflict within Hungary.

Kosáry comes closest to Waldapfel in the earliest chapters of his account. Like Waldapfel (and other Marxist historians) he seeks to place the Hungarian Revolution of 1848 in the context of the overthrow by the bourgeoisie of the feudal and absolutist order — a development which Kosáry sees as chronologically spreading outwards from seventeenth-century England, eventually reaching the European ‘periphery’ two centuries later.¹² More satisfactorily, Kosáry agrees with Waldapfel and most other Hungarian historians in indicating the range of possibilities which offered themselves in the spring and early summer of 1848 and which mostly pointed to a successful outcome of the revolutionary struggle. Not only was the court in Vienna, later removed to Innsbruck, ready to make concessions but the entire future of the Monarchy, and of Hungary’s place within it, was also uncertain. The strong possibility that the German provinces of the Monarchy would enter a renewed German confederation made it seem likely that Habsburg relations with Hungary could be transformed. It might thus be that the Habsburg emperor assumed responsibility as a constitutional ruler within the German *Bund*, a situation which would oblige him to remodel his relations with Hungary

10 István Hajnal, *A Batthyány-kormány külpolitikája*, Budapest, 1957, p. 28.

11 Géza Herczegh, *Magyarország külpolitikája 1896–1919*, Budapest, 1987.

12 Kosáry, *Magyarország és a nemzetközi politika*, pp. 7–8; Eszter Waldapfel, *A forradalom és szabadságharc levelestára*, i, Budapest, 1950, (Bevezetés), p. iii.

on an equal, constitutional footing. By going in with Germany, moreover, the emperor would upset the Slavs within the Monarchy, as well as Russia, and so be forced to rely increasingly on Hungarian support. Alternatively, the monarch might choose to abandon Vienna altogether and to reside permanently in Buda, which would free him from the influence of the camarilla and permit increased Hungarian influence on imperial policy. Whatever the outcome, therefore, Hungary looked destined to become the linchpin in a new Habsburg and, thus, European order. Inspired by this prospect, Batthyány began to envisage a Hungaro-centric Habsburg Monarchy in which a remodelled 'Big Hungary' finally got its hands on Dalmatia and Galicia. There followed several visits and appeals, including Kossuth's own, aimed at enticing Emperor Ferdinand from Vienna and Innsbruck to Buda.¹³

It is certainly possible to conceive of the history of Hungary's relations with the Habsburgs in terms of the contradiction both between the rights variously claimed by the *ország* and the Reich and, more specifically, between the respective terms of the Pragmatic Sanction of 1723 and Law X of 1790. The former stressed the 'indivisible and inseparable' nature of the Monarchy and of Hungary's permanent place within it; the second that Hungary was 'an independent kingdom', subject to none other, having its own *consistentiam et constitutionem*.¹⁴ After March 1848, however, it seemed that it was the court itself which was in the process of abandoning the Pragmatic Sanction and of forging a new relationship with Germany, even to the extent of abandoning its commitments under the Pragmatic Sanction. Palacký understood this immediately — hence his intemperate letter to

13 Herczegh, *Magyarország külpolitikája*, pp. 242–48. Herczegh also introduces here the canard of relations between Hungary and the ruler being reconstructed on the basis of 'personal union'. See László Péter, 'Old Hats and Closet Revisionists: Reflections on Domokos Kosáry's Latest Work on the 1848 Hungarian Revolution', *The Slavonic and East European Review*, 80, 2002, pp. 296–319 (pp. 305–07).

14 Antal Szécsen brilliantly summed up the constitutional background to 1848 in an anonymous letter to *The Times*, 10 July, 1849: '... the reciprocal position of the two countries [Austria and Hungary] was, especially subsequent to the Pragmatic Sanction, that of an indissoluble union under the same reigning family, modified, as regarded Hungary, by the formal recognition of its constitutional rights, and its national and administrative independence ... The want of positive laws, contradictory customs, the encroachments of the Government, as well as its concessions, had confused and complicated [matters] to an extreme, and opened a vast field to the most contradictory interpretations.' The provisions of 1723 and 1790, however, became contradictory only when the vocabulary of the 'state' was brought into the equation: see Péter, 'Old Hats and Closet Revisionists', pp. 305–06.

Frankfurt in early April, of which historians usually recall only the first line.¹⁵ In much the same way, the Batthyány ministry stretched its interpretation of the powers given it under the April Laws to pursue what may be perceived as an ‘independent foreign policy’.

It is in this respect that Kosáry departs most radically from Waldapfel’s account. Waldapfel saw Hungary as pursuing an independent policy only after the September crisis, although she allowed that the basis for this policy had been laid in the preceding months and especially in the course of Hungary’s diplomacy at Frankfurt.¹⁶ Kosáry, by contrast, sees the Batthyány ministry as pursuing an independent line from the first. How may these contradictory positions be explained? The problem is, surely, that Waldapfel confuses an independent policy with one which was aimed expressly against the court. In fact, it was perfectly possible, and indeed logical, for Hungarian and imperial policy to converge in the spring of 1848: after all, both had much to gain from pressing the *Gross-deutsch* solution. To this extent cooperation rather than confrontation marked their relations. The Austrian government was thus perfectly willing to concede Prince Pál Esterházy, the Hungarian minister *a latere* in Vienna, the title of foreign minister, even to the extent of addressing correspondence to Esterházy *an das königliche ungarische Ministerium des Äußern*.¹⁷ Likewise, the court was prepared to cede Hungary a flag of marque to protect Hungarian vessels in the Adriatic from attack by the Piedmontese fleet, even though the request, which originated with Kossuth, flew in the face of the Pragmatic Sanction.¹⁸ Moreover, through the court’s investiture of the palatine with plenipotentiary powers, a mechanism was provided by which diplomats, most notably László Szalay, could receive some form of official accreditation abroad.¹⁹

15 ‘Ich bin ein Böhme slawischen Stammen ... Sie nothwendiger Weise darauf ausgesehen willen und werden, Österreich als selbständigen Kaiserstaat unheilbar zu schwächen, ja ihn unmöglich zu machen, — einen Staat dessen Erhaltung, Integrität und Kräftigung eine hohe und wichtige Angelegenheit nicht meines Volkes allein, sondern ganz Europas, ja der Humanität und Civilisation selbst ihn und sein muss.’ Georg J. Morava, *Franz Palacký. Eine frühe Vision von Mitteleuropa*, Vienna, 1990, p. 135.

16 This criticism of Waldapfel is also made in Urbán’s review in *Századok*, pp. 1297–8.

17 Hajnal, *A Batthyány-kormány külpolitikája*, p. 22.

18 *ibid.*, p. 88. This did not, however, stop the Hungarian frigate ‘HMS Implacable’ being seized by the British government when it docked in London for repairs.

19 The imperial court continued, however, to consider Szalay as emissary of the Hungarian diet to Frankfurt: see Mária Ormos and István Majoros, *Európa a nemzetközi küzدőtéren. Felemelkedés és hanyatlás, 1814–1945*, Budapest, 1998, p. 99.

The ministry in Pest was, for its part, equally conciliatory. Indeed, what is most striking is how firmly the Hungarian ministry stuck by the principles of the Pragmatic Sanction. Certainly, the ministry's interest in sticking by the Pragmatic Sanction had much to do with its hope that the court would assist it in the developing conflict with the Croats and Serbs.²⁰ While stretching the powers conceded under the April laws, the ministry did not, therefore, rush to embrace policies that flew in the face of the principle of 'indivisible and inseparable'. Thus, although sympathizing with the Italian struggle, Batthyány did not offer support and kept generally aloof from making provocative statements. Hungarian troops continued to join in the fight against Charles Albert and the Italian insurgents. Only in July did Kossuth seek to attach conditions to continued Hungarian support for the war.²¹ Even as late as the next month, by which time the court's duplicity was clear, the Lower House's acceptance of Pál Nyáry's motion that Hungary would not support Austria in a war aimed against German unity provoked much heart-searching within the government on account of its evident breach of the Pragmatic Sanction.²²

By this time, however, the stakes had changed. Although few appreciated it at the time, Radetzky's victory over Charles Albert at Custozza on 25 July returned the initiative to the court. Troops could now be diverted from the Italian front to prosecute a war in Hungary. Moreover, the Serb revolt was already in full swing and there was increasing evidence that the insurgents were being directed by Austrian officers. Increasingly confident, the court during August calculatedly wrecked Szalay's mission in Frankfurt and impertinently demanded that Hungary now conform in its military and diplomatic affairs to its own interpretation of the Pragmatic Sanction (i.e. that 'the existence of a Kingdom of Hungary separate from the Austrian Empire must be described as politically impossible'), even to the extent of renegotiating the April Laws.²³ Meanwhile, Jelačić, whose complicity with the Serbs was by now evident, openly challenged the authority of the ministry in Pest and was increasingly the recipient of military shipments from Vienna. On 11 September, Jelačić crossed the Drava, the Batthyány ministry collapsed, and with the approval of the diet

20 Kiss, *Az 1848–1849. évi minisztertanácsi jegyzőkönyvek*, pp. 21, 60–61, 65.

21 Kosáry, *Magyarország és a nemzetközi politika 1848–1849-ben*, pp. 26–27.

22 *ibid.*, p. 28; *Deák Ferencz beszédei*, vol 2, ed. Manó Kónyi, Budapest, 1903, pp. 288–89.

23 C. A. Macartney, *The Habsburg Empire 1790–1918*, 2nd edition, London, 1971, p. 394.

Kossuth assumed power as president of the Committee of National Defence.

The ‘September crisis’ did not, however (and *pace* Waldapfel), suddenly galvanize Hungarian diplomacy. As Kosáry suggests, Hungarian diplomacy had long been active, but it had not hitherto thought it necessary openly to oppose the court. Behind the scenes, however, the ministry had forged unofficial links with Britain and, more circumspectly, with France. There was even discussion of setting up consulates in Serbia and the Romanian principalities. Nor, indeed, was the government in Pest unaware that the propitious international circumstances of the spring could all too easily be upset. During the spring and summer, Kossuth repeatedly warned of the danger of Russian intervention and of a potential collision between Russia and the ‘free nations’ of Europe. He saw, moreover, the possibility that, if the *Grossdeutsch* solution should fail, the future of the Monarchy would rest on the Slavs, and Habsburg policy become increasingly aligned with Russia. For this reason, he urged closer links with Frankfurt. In a letter written to Dénes Pázmány, who was with Szalay in Frankfurt, Kossuth encouraged the envoy to closer relations with Germany, even to the extent of constructing a treaty of mutual assurance by which Germany would guarantee Hungary’s territorial integrity in return for Hungary supporting the *Bund* against Czech secession.²⁴ Kossuth continued to urge, moreover, that the king move the court to Buda or, as an alternative, that the young Franz Joseph be crowned in Hungary as *junior rex*.²⁵

It was, however, not at Kossuth’s behest but on Batthyány’s own initiative that Count László Teleki was sent at the end of August to Paris as Hungary’s special envoy.²⁶ Earlier correspondence with Paris had suggested that Teleki would be formally recognized there as the representative of the Hungarian government, but, as it turned out, no such recognition was forthcoming. Teleki’s mission was not, however, a failure. As Kosáry argues, the French government was by no means unaware of Hungary’s plight and certainly not unsympathetic. If France, however, could not help the Poles and Romanians, on whose behalf it had long been diplomatically active, it was unlikely to do much for Hungary.²⁷ As Lamartine had earlier

24 Kosáry, *Magyarország és a nemzetközi politika 1848–1849-ben*, p. 17.

25 *ibid.*, p. 27. The title of ‘junior king’ had been employed in Hungary during the Middle Ages.

26 *ibid.*, p. 32. Here Kosáry corrects Waldapfel’s account which places too much emphasis on Kossuth’s role in arranging the mission.

27 Kosáry, *Magyarország és a nemzetközi politika 1848–1849-ben*, p. 46–47.

put it, 'We love Poland, we love Italy, we love all the oppressed nations, but most of all we love France'.²⁸ As Kosáry indicates, the real achievement of Teleki lay his influence on French public opinion which at the start of his mission had largely conceived of the Hungarians as a 'catholicized, Slavonic people' who practised tyrannical rule against their own minorities. Teleki was both prolific and *salonfähig*, planting stories in the press, cultivating ministers and journalists, both on the left and on the right, and turning individual papers, most notably Victor Hugo's *Événement*, round from their originally anti-Hungarian stance. Teleki's *La Hongrie aux peuples civilisés*, published in December 1848 and subsequently translated into German, English and Italian editions, proved vital in mobilizing both French and international opinion.

Teleki was, however, not just a propagandist but also acted as a sort of *de facto* Hungarian foreign minister abroad.²⁹ He opened up contacts with Charles Albert and Venice with the aim of coordinating diplomacy and military policy against the Habsburgs, and, importantly, also developed close ties with the Polish emigration in Paris. Teleki's mission was warmly embraced by Prince Czartoryski who saw Hungary as a potential cornerstone in the struggle against the Habsburgs and thus in the liberation of Poland. Czartoryski was convinced that a common Slav and Hungarian front was within reach. To this end, he sent — vainly as it turned out — his own emissary, Count Ludwik Bystrzonowski, to Karlowitz (Karlóca, Sremski Karlovci) to negotiate with Patriarch Rajačić with a view to putting an end to Serb-Hungarian hostilities.³⁰ At the same time, Teleki was fully aware that the nationalities conflict within Hungary was not only 'bad publicity' for the Hungarian cause abroad, but also hemmed in the range of diplomatic options available. Repeatedly, thus, he called on Kossuth to strike a deal with the Serbs, Croats and Romanians and, embracing one of Czartoryski's own preferred solutions, to reconstitute Hungary along federal lines. As he wrote to Kossuth in the spring of 1849, he should at least address to the nationalities 'a fine-sounding proclamation ... for God's sake, give them whatever is possible ... If Austria cannot be defeated and brought down in any other way, then let us reconstruct our Hungarian homeland on the basis of confederation ...'.³¹

28 A. J. P. Taylor, *The Struggle for Mastery in Europe 1848–1918*, Oxford and New York, 1954, p. 10.

29 Pál Esterházy resigned as minister *a latere* in September 1848 in protest at the court's demand that the April Laws be renegotiated; Count Kázmér Batthyány was appointed foreign minister in May 1849.

30 Kosáry, *Magyarország és a nemzetközi politika 1848–1849-ben*, p. 137.

31 *ibid.*, p. 56.

Teleki did not ‘speak’ for the government.³² Indeed, his advice with respect to the nationalities was criticized by the recently-appointed foreign minister, Kázmér Batthyány.³³ Despite this rebuff, Teleki continued to promote the Hungarian cause. Following the defeat of the French radicals in the early summer of 1849 and the decisive shift to the right of the government of Louis Napoleon, Teleki turned to Great Britain for support. The Hungarian cause already had a number of supporters in Britain, including the Scot Joseph Andrew Blackwell, who had done much in the preceding years to advertise Hungarian politics.³⁴ By promoting the cause of independent Hungary, the impecunious Blackwell hoped to land for himself the post of consul in Pressburg or Pest. From February 1849, Ferenc Pulszky was also active as Teleki’s special representative in Britain. Despite his many personal failings (not least his propensity for self-aggrandizement), Pulszky repeated many of Teleki’s successes in Paris, winning over sections of the press (*The Globe* published articles on Hungary on an almost daily basis), responding to criticisms of Hungarian policy, and forging links with Richard Cobden and several of the Chartist leaders.³⁵ Pulszky and Teleki well understood that in Britain in particular appeals of a demagogic character were unlikely to make their mark. Both stressed, therefore, the strict legality of Hungary’s case.³⁶ In respect of the Independence Declaration of April 1849, its contents were considered by Teleki so potentially upsetting to the Hungarian cause abroad that he first sought to suppress its publication and then to release it in a highly doctored form.³⁷ (The Independence Declaration is conventionally seen, even by Kosáry, as a diplomatic disaster and the product of a government which, on account of its isolation, was no longer alert to the realities of international affairs.³⁸ Since at the time of its publication, Kossuth hoped to influence the international conference scheduled to meet at Verona, and since participation at this event depended upon independent statehood, the Declaration might also be seen as both timely and expedient). Although Pulszky and Teleki were received privately by Palmerston, their conversation did not lead to any appreciable change in British policy. This rested, as it always had done,

32 *ibid.*, p. 181.

33 Deak, *The Lawful Revolution*, pp. 296–97.

34 Kosáry, *Magyarország és a nemzetközi politika 1848–1849-ben*, p. 225.

35 Ormos and Majoros, *Európa a nemzetközi küzdőtéren*, p. 101.

36 Kosáry, *Magyarország és a nemzetközi politika 1848–1849-ben*, p. 258.

37 For the various versions of the Independence Declaration distributed by Teleki, see Waldapfel, *A független magyar külpolitika*, pp. 208–10.

38 Kosáry, *Magyarország és a nemzetközi politika 1848–1849-ben*, pp. 67–71.

on the notion of the balance of power, defence of the settlement of 1815, and the necessity of a strong Austria. The most that was to be gained from Britain in 1849 was Palmerston's advice to the Russian minister, 'Finissez en vite!'³⁹

As we have already indicated, Teleki considered the nationalities conflict to be the Achilles heel of Hungarian independence. For Kosáry, however, the nationalities struggle was the inevitable consequence of the rise of nationalism and was as such unavoidable.⁴⁰ Although Kosáry indicates that at fleeting moments deals might have been struck between the Hungarian government and the nationalities, he repudiates Waldapfel's contention that a united front against Austria was always on the cards.⁴¹ From the very start, the demands put forward by the nationalities proved unmeetable. It was probably with the Romanians that the Hungarian government had the best chance of success, but it had no obvious reasons to make concessions during 1848. By the next year, the gulf of distrust proved impossible to bridge and, in the mean time, the court had successfully brought the nationalities into its fold. Even the publication of the octroyed constitution in March 1849, which dealt a death-blow to all the nationalities' hopes for territorial autonomy, did little to change the situation. As late as June 1849, by which time peace-negotiations between Hungarians and Romanians were relatively advanced, the leader of the Romanians of the Banat, Eftimie Murgu, was able to observe. 'I do not believe that there is way of settling relations between the two nations [i.e. Romanians and Hungarians] peacefully. It is impossible to get them to agree on account of their vengeful blindness, national pride and embitteredness'.⁴² By the time a deal was struck, it was all too late. Negotiations on a confederation capable of accommodating both Romanians and Hungarians were completed only in exile.⁴³

To what extent was an outcome other than total defeat possible? Kosáry makes several important points in this regard. First, Hungarian policy remained active and, more importantly, realistic almost right up to the end. Kossuth did not cease, therefore, trying to negotiate with Austria, both in the form of the court and of the Reichstag, only to have his

39 *ibid.*, p. 255; Herczegh, *Magyarország külpolitikája*, p. 272.

40 Kosáry, *Magyarország és a nemzetközi politika 1848–1849-ben*, p. 103.

41 'Was there not then the possibility of forging a united front against the oppressive power of the Habsburgs? Yes, there was!': Waldapfel, *A független magyar külpolitika*, p. 101. See also Herczegh, *Magyarország külpolitikája*, pp. 273–74; Kosáry, *Magyarország és a nemzetközi politika 1848–1849-ben*, pp. 103, 181.

42 Kosáry, *Magyarország és a nemzetközi politika 1848–1849-ben*, p. 207.

43 *ibid.*, p. 219.

overtures famously rebuffed by Windischgrätz. Moreover, and notwithstanding his endless denunciation of the Russian menace, Kossuth continued to press Hungary's case with St Petersburg. During the spring of 1849, he sought to open links through the Russian military command by which he might not only explain the legitimacy of his actions to Tsar Nicholas but even hint that the crown of Hungary be offered to a scion of the Romanov dynasty. In order to avoid antagonizing the tsar, Kossuth additionally restrained Bem from invading Galicia and proclaiming a revolt in Poland. As Kossuth put it in April 1849, 'I will not risk the fate of Hungary for the sake of the Poles'.⁴⁴ As against Géza Herczegh's view that Kossuth sought through the Independence Declaration to convert Hungary's struggle into a war of peoples — a view which comports with the notion that Kossuth's perception of the world was becoming increasingly clouded by the Debrecen dust — Kosáry shows that Kossuth still understood where real power lay. Kossuth did not, therefore, address his declaration to the peoples of Europe but instead to their governments, and he waited upon these to respond to his appeal and, as he foresaw, to learn from Hungary's fate the true nature of Russian ambitions.⁴⁵

Secondly, Kosáry argues that there was room for manoeuvre, even in the last phases of the war. In explaining the campaigns of 1849, Kosáry vindicates General Görgey one more time.⁴⁶ As Kosáry argues, had Görgei been permitted to remain in the west and to take on Haynau, and had he won, then a peace on more advantageous terms might have been secured. Instead, however, Dembinski urged that the Hungarian army concentrate on Szeged, for no other reason than, so it would appear, to be ready to flee into Turkey. Likewise, if negotiations between the Hungarians and the Russian generals had born fruit, then different outcomes might have arisen — not least the amnesty which Schwarzenberg was drafting even at the moment Görgei surrendered at Világos. In short, Kosáry repudiates the notion of the *kényszerpálya*: the inescapable path which would take Hungary to the ultimate catastrophe. In this respect, he explicitly concurs with Hajnal that, in assessing the options thrown up at the time of the revolution, it is wrong simply to work backwards from the final result.⁴⁷

44 *ibid.*, p. 61.

45 *ibid.*, p. 60; Herczegh, *Magyarország külpolitikája*, p. 266.

46 See thus Domokos Kosáry, *A Görgey-kérdés története*, 2 vols, Budapest, 1994; discussed by László Péter, 'The "Görgey Question" Revisited: Reflections on Academician Domokos Kosáry's Work', *The Slavonic and East European Review*, 76, 1998, pp. 85–100.

47 Kosáry, *Magyarország és a nemzetközi politika 1848–1849-ben*, p. 287.

Finally, in respect to the prevailing opinion that Hungarian foreign policy 'failed' in 1848–49, Kosáry makes the following observations. Batthyány, Teleki and Kossuth did try to use the opportunities given them and their failure was only partial. The propaganda of Teleki and the story of the military struggle waged by Kossuth ensured that Hungary 'carried a greater international reputation and political weight after defeat than she had before'. Moreover, '[The War of Independence] also had the consequence that when Austria, having been sobered up by military defeats in the Italian and German wars, was compelled to reorganize her empire, she chose in the end out of all sorts of possible outcomes to reach agreement with the proven strength of Hungary'.⁴⁸

Ultimately, our view of Hungarian foreign policy in 1848–49 depends upon our view of Hungarian history as a whole. If we subscribe to the *kényszerpálya*, then we may well, in Mód-ish fashion, see the Hungarian Revolution and War of Independence as being destined from the first for defeat; the forces of international power-politics, the legacy of 1815 and, perhaps, even the value attached to Austrian state-bonds simply proved too much. The same applies to those other turning-points in Hungarian history: Mohács, the Rákóczi revolt, 1944, 1956 and, even, 1989. If we believe, however, that individuals can make a difference, then proper attention should also be paid to the choices for which they were responsible and which shaped the subsequent pattern of events. We may in the context of Hungary's diplomacy in the revolutionary years fasten on the accomplishments of Batthyány and Teleki. We should also, however, recall Ferenc Deák's observation on the Settlement of 1867, which Kosáry quotes: 'History will link this transformation to the name of the man who set it in motion and carried it through with tireless energy in '48. Despite the unfortunate events which ensued, this part of his achievement has endured and will continue to do so'.⁴⁹

48 *ibid.*, p. 293.

49 *ibid.*, p. 292.

Kossuth and Štúr: Two National Heroes

Robert Evans

Every great man possesses, we may suppose, a distinctive set of qualities and experiences. Let me begin by setting out the characteristic traits of the national hero who is indelibly linked with the stirring events of 1848–49 in Hungary. At the risk of appearing over-schematic, I offer the following ten bullet-points as a summary.

- He stood out for his handsome, bearded but clean-cut, romantic features and his innate powers of leadership.
- He was born into the higher echelons of his society, but enjoyed little inherited wealth and felt from the first a burning commitment to the welfare of his people as a whole.
- He was a member of the Lutheran minority and rather anticlerical, though strikingly conciliatory towards lay Catholics who would join in with his reform programme.
- He was a man of outstanding eloquence, in Magyar and in other languages.
- He threw himself into politics from a young age, an involvement which was viewed with misgivings by the establishment through his association with a strongly national programme.
- He espoused liberal views, though at times he looked rather conservative to others and he could be outflanked by radical opinion.
- His career breakthrough came in the 1840s with official permission to edit a newspaper, which immediately became the focus of national attention.
- He was first elected as a deputy at the last of the old-style Hungarian diets, which sat for six months from November 1847.
- The next year he became civilian leader of the national uprising, with a strong inclination to intervene also in military affairs.
- With the failure of the cause in 1849, he withdrew for good from the domestic political scene and gave himself over to visionary plans for

the future which made many of his former supporters rather uncomfortable.

The reader will, I trust, recognize this as a portrayal of Lajos Kossuth, on the occasion of his two hundredth anniversary. But I am actually thinking equally of another Louis, his Slovak contemporary, Ľudovít Štúr, born thirteen years later. For the 'identikit' picture fits both of them. Štúr too had an alluring and commanding presence. He enjoyed certain advantages of birth, but felt himself a man of the people. He was a Protestant, who co-operated with many representatives of the Slovak Catholic majority. He was a powerful orator, not least in Magyar, the main language of Hungary's public life. Štúr too immersed himself in politics, albeit student and cultural politics, from his youth, and attracted disapproval from superiors who favoured less aggressive forms of national engagement. He was liberal in many of his aspirations, though with a romantic fervour which could be retrogressive and without the democratic priorities of some of his colleagues. He assumed a clear leadership role within the national movement when he gained approval for a journal, the *Slovenské Národné Noviny*, which he ran for roughly the same length of time that Kossuth edited the *Pesti Hírlap*. Then he made a belated entry into parliamentary politics, simultaneously with Kossuth, at the historic diet of 1847–48, where he represented an Upper Hungarian municipality. Štúr too played the most prominent part in mobilizing his people for the civil war which began in the autumn of 1848. When the Slovak national campaign, despite having espoused the winning Habsburg side against the Magyars, failed to achieve its goals in 1849, he was forced into a kind of internal exile, and reconsidered his priorities as fundamentally as did Kossuth. He gave himself over to strange and impractical schemes which were cut off by his untimely death in 1856.

Moreover, we shall find important overlaps in personal terms too between Kossuth and Štúr, just as the societies from which they emerged and the movements which they headed were inextricably intertwined both before and after the heady days of revolution. They are alike also, and by the same token different from all the rest of the 1848–49 political leaders in Hungary, in that Kossuth and Štúr have remained broad-based popular heroes among posterity, central figures in the shaping of national identity: contrast the more limited and questionable status of, e.g. Batthyány or Bem, Hurban or Hodža, Jelačić or Stratimirović, Bărnuțiu or Jancu, and, for that matter, those in the Austro-Bohemian realms too, with the possible exception of Palacký. At the same time, however, we should note contrasts and antitheses between the two, with the reputation of the one

resting significantly on a repudiation of the other. That is my theme in what follows: a tight focus for a brief exposition, which nevertheless carries, I hope, some wider implications. As befits this collection, it is conceived as a contribution to understanding Kossuth; but says more about Štúr, for the obvious reason of the latter's unfamiliarity in the Hungarian national consciousness — which itself results from the very divergent ways in which the revolutionary events came to be remembered.¹

Štúr's career (detailed for convenience in an Appendix below) soon placed him squarely at the centre of the developing nationality quarrels in Upper Hungary. He was the son of a Lutheran schoolteacher very consciously committed to the 'Czechoslovak' heritage, i.e. the use in Slovak Protestant communities of a more-or-less Czech form of the language and maintenance of its accompanying culture. For a time the elder Štúr even acted as mentor to the young Palacký, who then took this tradition with him to Prague and lent it prominence in Bohemia.² Yet the Štúr family also enjoyed status as protégés of the local land-owner, Count Imre Zay, who sustained a paternalistic regime in his little pocket borough of Zay-Ugróc (Uhrovec) with little regard to ethnic allegiance. Ľudovít studied at the Lutheran gymnasium in Pressburg, and stayed on for years afterwards — punctuated by a spell at the university of Halle — as amanuensis to his former Czechoslovak teacher there, Juraj Palkovič, and chief organizer of Slavonic courses and cultural activities at the school. He collected around him a group of intense, ascetic, austere, evangelical youths, the Štúrites (Štúrovci), as they soon came to be known, who committed themselves to a public and emotional advocacy of the Slav cause, especially in its local manifestations. Thus they went on pilgrimage to the proto-Slav shrine of nearby Devín (Dévény) castle, and decked this out in romantic symbolism. They were also the first to use the neo-Slavonic term

1 References are restricted to those strictly relevant for the present comparison, and largely come from the Slovak side, partly because the Kossuth presented here is too familiar to require much annotation, but equally because Hungarian writing on him has almost entirely ignored the Slovak dimension.

2 Jiří Kořalka, *František Palacký, 1798–1876: životopis*, Prague, 1999, p. 24 and *passim*.

Bratislava, or rather Břetislava, to describe the city which ordinary Slovaks called (and would long continue to call) Prešporok.³

Such gestures were already in good measure a response to perceived Magyar pressure on Štúr's own nationality. They generated further ethnic friction in their turn, particularly at the student level, both in Pressburg and beyond, and were accompanied by a regular war of pamphlets which had set in at the beginning of the 1830s and to which Štúr himself would contribute a decade later.⁴ These circumstances soon precipitated the *first* clash between Štúr and Kossuth. Its background lay in the campaign of the younger Zay, Károly, son of Imre, for a Protestant union in Hungary, ostensibly modelled on recent developments in Prussia, but really designed mainly to promote the interests of the Magyar liberal opposition, which predominated in the larger and more influential Calvinist branch of the church. The Slovak Lutherans replied with a petition to the emperor in Vienna (*Prestolný prosbopis*), which expostulated against this and raised a range of other grievances about the advancing tide of 'magyarization', as they perceived it.⁵

Štúr was in the thick of this confrontation, constantly urging on his more faint-hearted brethren. Where Imre Zay had shown marked favour to his family, not least to the evidently talented Ľudovít, Károly now told him plainly that there was no place for Slav culture in Hungary, or for

3 Flóra Kleinschmitzová, *Andrej Sládkovič a jeho doba*, Prague, 1928, pp. 30ff; T. J. G. Locher, *Die nationale Differenzierung und Integrierung der Slowaken und Tschechen in ihrem geschichtlichen Verlauf bis 1848*, Haarlem, 1931, pp. 139ff. Ján Francisci, *Vlastný životopis. Črty z doby Moysesovskej*, ed. F. Bokes, Bratislava, 1956, esp. 98ff.; Jozef Hurban, *Ľudovít Štúr. Rozpomienky*, ed. A. Mráz, Bratislava, 1959, esp. pp. 88–100; Jozef Butvin, *Slovenské národnozjednocovacie hnutie, 1780–1848: k otázke formovania novodobého slovenského buržoázneho národa*, Bratislava, 1965, pp. 242ff; Ludwig von [Lajos] Gogolák, *Beiträge zur Geschichte des slowakischen Volkes*, 3 vols., Munich, 1963–72, ii. pp. 119ff. Convenient summary in Peter Brock, *The Slovak National Awakening: An Essay in the Intellectual History of East Central Europe*, Toronto, 1976, pp. 38ff. Štúr's circle of friends appears also from his correspondence: *Listy Ľudovíta Štúra*, ed. Jozef Ambruš, 3 vols., Bratislava, 1954–60.

4 Most of the significant pamphlets are reprinted in Slovak translation in Ján V. Ormis (ed.), *O reč a národ: slovenské národné obrany z rokov 1832–48*, Bratislava, 1973. Štúr's contributions were, besides the 'Starý a nový vek Slováků', 1841, which circulated only in MS: *Die Beschwerden und Klagen der Slaven in Ungarn über die gesetzwidrigen Übergriffe der Magyaren*, Leipzig, 1843, and its sequel, *Das 19. Jahrhundert und der Magyarismus*, Vienna, 1845, both in Ormis, pp. 123–9 and 517–93, 146–52 and 699–721.

5 Very full account in Daniel Rapant, *Slovenský prestolný prosbopis z roku 1842*, 2 vols., L Sv. Mikuláš, 1943, which prints the Petition at ii, pp. 337–52.

those who advocated it. Kossuth, as a card-carrying Lutheran himself, backed Zay to the hilt (even rewriting the minutes when local synods seemed to him too limp), and fulminated about the lack, even the impossibility, of any Slovak 'nation': 'Wherever we look in Hungary, nowhere do we see the substance of any *tót* nationality. And all those qualities, which constitute the requirements for a nationality, are possessed in our homeland only by the *magyar* race.'⁶ Kossuth also stood close to the drive led by his friend Pulcszky for Štúr's dismissal from his post in Pressburg as a 'pan-Slav' agitator, which was successful by the end of 1843.⁷

By that time the basic issue was clear. All the Magyar reformist leaders, with Kossuth as their most eloquent spokesman, saw nationality, *nemzetiség*, as an integral part of the modern state and public law which they proposed to create; hence the impossibility of accommodating non-Magyars (apart from the Croats, with their special constitutional position) except in private and as individuals.⁸ Slovaks — more than any others, given their lack of institutional backbone — developed, because they had to develop, an organic, cultural, communitarian ideology of nationality, *národnost'*, which the Magyars in their turn could neither understand nor value. The latter accused Slovak patriots of being 'pan-Slavs' (which in cultural terms had some truth) and found readiest proof of this in those 'Czechoslovak' links which were particularly important to the Lutheran tradition. Ľudovít Štúr, now persecuted for his convictions as Kossuth had been a few years earlier, seemed to personify that Slovak response.

In fact, however, Štúr proceeded to play a shrewd gambit. He took up the cause of a *separate* Slovak literary language, of which he indeed

6 '... bármerre tekintünk is Magyarországon, sehol nem látunk anyagot ily *tót* nemzetiségre. És mindama tulajdonokkal, miket a nemzetiség kellékei közé sorozánk, hazánkban csak egy, csak az egyetlen magyar faj bír': Rapant, *Prosbopis*, i. pp. 125ff., 156f., 185ff.; ii, nos 66, 86, 88, 94, 96, 98 (qu.), 100, 101. Cf. 'There was never a Slovak nation, even in a dream': quoted in Josef Macůrek, *Dějiny maďarů a uherského státu*, Prague, 1934, p. 236. For the quarrel with Zay, see also Hurban, *Ľudovít Štúr*, pp. 198ff; Gogolák, *Beiträge*, ii, pp. 186ff.

7 Rapant, *Prosbopis*, i, pp. 33–42, 215–22; ii., nos 27, 50, 67, 138, 140, 142. Cf. Hurban, *Ľudovít Štúr*, pp. 335ff.; Karol Goláň, *Štúrovské pokolenie: výber z diela*, Bratislava, 1964, pp. 121–53.

8 For Kossuth in this Hungarian context, see Mihály Horváth, *Huszonöt év Magyarország történelméből 1823-tól 1848-ig*, 2 vols., Geneva, 1864, ii. pp. 91ff.; Domokos Kosáry in *Emlékkönyv Kossuth Lajos születésének 150. évfordulójára*, ed. István Z. Tóth, 2 vols., Budapest, 1952, i, pp. 37ff.; György Szabad, *Kossuth politikai pályája, ismert és ismeretlen megnyilatkozásai tükrében*, Budapest, 1977, pp. 68ff.; János Varga, *Helyét kereső Magyarország: politikai eszmék és koncepciók az 1840-es évek elején*, Budapest, 1982, pp. 54ff.

became the prime creator. By means of it he propagated from 1845 a moderate but demotic reform message to a wider national public, mainly through the columns of his newspaper, the *Slovenské Národné Noviny*.⁹ In due course this organ carried the speeches which Štúr made at the diet on the eve of the revolution of 1848, as deputy for the town of Zvolen/Zólyom. It is often supposed that he was the first nationally-conscious Slovak ever elected to the Hungarian *Országgyűlés*. That is not quite true: Štúr's mentor Palkovič had represented a similar constituency, Krupina/Korpona, for years before him — earning his humble mention in the young Kossuth's diet journal.¹⁰ Nor is it true that Štúr, any more than his circumspect predecessor, took a leading or radical part in this assembly (housed in what is now the Bratislava University Library, with its commemorative plaque). Yet he did manage to publicize further the needs of the mass of the Slovak peasantry, and in the course of his advocacy experienced a *second* clash with Kossuth, which we shall consider later.

In March–April 1848 Štúr welcomed Hungary's social and political transformation, so far as it went — which for the bulk of the Slovak population was not very far. But he rejected categorically the national implications of the new Magyar regime, embodying as it did the Kossuth-Zay-Pulszky mentality already so familiar to him. He was active in the two Liptovský Svätý Mikuláš/Liptószentmiklós meetings at which a Slovak programme was devised, and the resultant demands ('Žiadosti slovenského národa') largely rested on Štúr's formulations.¹¹ These were brusquely rejected by the Hungarian ministry, where Kossuth, with Batthyány, by now called the tune. Štúr was forced into an adventurous flight from the country, in order to avoid arrest. This led him straight on to his prominent role at the Slav Congress in Prague, of which he had in fact been the chief begetter. Fired up to a more Austro-Slav militancy by these events, Štúr, with his revolutionary associates Jozef Hurban and Michal Hodža, returned to Hungary in the winter months, under Habsburg aegis, with a motley collection of Slovak and other Slav volunteers, to

9 The title in its original spelling was *Slovenskje Národňje Novini*. See Mária Vybíjalová, *Slovenskje národnje novini: boje o ich povolenie*, Martin, 1972. The crucial language text is Štúr's *Nárečja slovenskuo alebo potreba písania v tomto nárečí* (again in the original spelling), first published at Pressburg in 1846.

10 Mária Vybíjalová, *Juraj Palkovič, 1769–1850. Kapitoly k ideovému formovaniu osobnosti a pôsobeniu v národnom hnutí*, Bratislava, 1968, pp. 321–55; *Kossuth Lajos összes munkái [KLÖM]*, Budapest, 1948–, iii, pp. 55, 622; *ibid.*, iv, p. 52.

11 Daniel Rapant, *Slovenské povstanie roku 1848–49: dejiny a dokumenty*, 13 vols, T.Sv. Martin/Bratislava, 1937–67, i–ii. The 'Žiadosti' are printed *ibid.* ii, no. 66.

spearhead an ill-organized and scrappy counter-insurrection.¹² It was mastered with ease by Kossuth's government of national defence, whose troops and officials henceforth for months gave at least as good as they received from the Austrians, till forced into capitulation by the massive disciplined ranks of the one Slavonic great power.

Clearly Kossuth won the *first* round of the fame stakes. Moreover, he did so in some measure at the expense of Štúr and his kind. Kossuth was able to brand the Štúrites as crypto-conservatives, pulling Habsburg chestnuts out of the fire — or alternatively, and however incompatibly, as dangerous 'communists' or anarchists, threatening the destruction of every accepted value. All this confirmed Kossuth's reputation both as a radical liberal politician and as a great national leader, not just among his own people. On the one hand he became an icon across the continent; on the other he exerted a wider impact within east-central Europe. Even most Slovak opinion, so far as it was engaged at all, proved Magyarone in 1848–49. That is evident from the very patchy response in Upper Hungary to the overtures from Štúr and his fellow rebels, who were repudiated, for example, in little towns like Krupina and Zvolen which, as modest citadels of Slovak culture, had previously entrusted Palkovič and Štúr with their dietal mandate.¹³ Years later one of the most diehard and anti-Magyar Slovak leaders, Hurban, actually admitted Kossuth's allure, writing of his 'unprecedented and unheard-of attraction. Kossuth was a phenomenon; every trait and feature in him was manly beauty.'¹⁴ (I have not quite cited the whole of that verdict yet: the remainder will follow at the end of this essay.)

Then came Világos and the Bach hussars. But precisely the success, until they were quashed by military *force majeure*, of the civic and liberal aspects of the 1848 programme, the ones most incarnated in Kossuth, encouraged a reassertion of those policies when the Hungarian opposition later regained its initiative in the Habsburg Monarchy. The 1867 settlement was widely seen as a vindication of his best ideas, even if Kossuth condemned it in dudgeon from his exile. By contrast the Slovak

12 Described in exhaustive detail, and with rival interpretations, in Rapant, *Slovenské povstanie*, and Lajos Steier, *A tót nemzetiségi kérdés 1848–49-ben*, 2 vols, Budapest, 1937.

13 Steier, *Nemzetiségi kérdés*, esp. ii, nos 5–18.

14 Hurban, *Ludovít Štúr*, p. 284; cf. pp. 538f.

movement lost its impetus for a full half-century. Štúr, soon disillusioned with the post-war regime, retired into the shadows and wrote — in German — a strange defence of Russian pan-Slavism which hardly became known until much later, and certainly could not contribute further to his progressive reputation, before his tragic early death in a hunting accident.¹⁵ Štúr's earlier political ideas indeed re-emerged in the Slovak Memorandum of 1861, then in the cultural association called Matica Slovenská. But so, *pari passu*, did the ideas of Kossuth's former ally Zay, which were now taken up by another Magyarizing zealot in Upper Hungary, Béla Grünwald, who was instrumental in dissolving the Matica and reducing the Slovak cause to impotence and to an apparent total marginality. Even Kossuth, who in emigration famously became a convert to confederal notions and national reconciliation, never seriously rethought his position vis-à-vis the Slovaks.¹⁶

When Kossuth died in 1894, his popular reputation stood secure, even if official attitudes remained more equivocal because of his entrenched stance against the Austrian connection and — so far as this was still remembered — his unwelcome option for co-operation with *some* of the Magyars' neighbours. From then on the cult set in, with a proliferation of Kossuth streets (beginning with the one down which his hearse had passed in Pest), statues, and the rest. Meanwhile Štúr's posthumous celebrity was just beginning to germinate, with the gradual Slovak reaction to those aggravated Magyarization policies by the turn of the century. It surely proved important for him — and an intriguing contrast with the splendid isolation in which Kossuth has always been depicted — that Štúr found a Boswell in Hurban, whose biography of his friend, dripping in pathos but a powerful and intimate portrait with excellent command of detail, first appeared in the 1880s.¹⁷ Štúr's prestige was enhanced, ironically, when a younger generation of Slovaks returned to the pro-Czech

15 *Das Slawenthum und die Welt der Zukunft*, critical edn. by Josef Jirásek, Bratislava, 1931. There had already been certain hints of conservatism, in terms of both German cultural influence and Holy Alliance proclivities, in Štúr's earlier years, particularly in his pamphlet *Das 19. Jahrhundert und der Magyarismus*.

16 For Grünwald: Mihály Lackó, *Halál Párizsban: Grünwald Béla történész művei és betegségei*, Budapest, 1986; cf. in general László Szarka, *Szlovák nemzeti fejlődés, magyar nemzetiségi politika, 1867–1918*, Bratislava, 1995. Endre Kovács, *A Kossuth-emigráció és az európai szabadságmozgalmak*, Budapest, 1967.

17 Hurban, *Ludovít Štúr*, first appeared in instalments in the periodical *Slovenské Pohľady*. Štúr, however, fared less well abroad. The first major study of him in a world language appeared only in 1913 with Hélène Tourtzer [Turcerová]'s *Louis Štúr et l'idée de l'indépendance slovaque*, Cahors/Alençon, 1913, and this work, a Paris thesis, though a work of real quality, was little noticed.

orientation from which he had, to a degree, distanced himself; but combined this with the broader public appeal and the practical cultivation of nationality through material betterment and associational activities which had been hallmarks of the Štúrites. Whereas the cult of Štúr was at first restricted to small groups of patriots, and above all Lutheran ones, it spread as the Slovak peasantry came to be mobilized more effectively in the early twentieth century. With the caesura of 1918 and the full-scale quest for antecedents of the modern Slovak cause, he took his place as the revered creator of a unified national movement in its first and formative phase.

Štúr's fame was now helped by a curious episode involving Kossuth at that diet which they had jointly attended. On 17 November 1847 Štúr had given his maiden speech, calling for municipal rights — as befitted a representative of the towns — but also lamenting the hardships of the common man. At this, it appears, Kossuth himself riposted: '... [it is] fate that he who stands lower in society must be abased and bear burdens, whereas he who rises in civic life gains rights and respect ...'. His observation, so it seems, was stored up by Štúr, who delivered a spirited rebuttal of it when he next spoke, at greater length, on 21 December.¹⁸ The exchange looks a very odd one. Can Kossuth have made such uncharacteristic remarks at all? The record in his complete works only hints at such a passage, and with a more or less opposite meaning.¹⁹ Yet neither is there any suggestion that Štúr, who definitely quoted Kossuth's words before the assembled deputies, had made them up — in which case he would surely have been brought to account by the insulted party himself. Not that the authorized versions of Štúr's are always beyond reproach —

18 Štúr's speech of 21 Dec. 1847, printed from *Slovenské Národné Noviny*, in L. Štúr, *Kde leží naše bieda?*, T. Sv. Martin, 1948, pp. 141–53. Cf. Ján Hučko, *Život a dielo Ludovíta Štúra*, Martin, 1984, pp. 148–52.

19 Kossuth Lajos az utolsó rendi országgyűlésen, 1847–8 [= *KLÖM*, xi], ed. István Barta, Budapest, 1951, no. 65, pp. 304f.: '... Valódi fátumnak tekintem, hogy nálunk mindenki kiváltságra törekzik ... Ha ki a köznép sorából kiemelkedett, azonnal felmentetik a közterhektől, mint honoratior; senki sem akar nép lenni. Ez bün, ez szerencsétlenség a nemzetre nézve, s kik reformra vagyunk hivatva, többé nem türhetünk illy anomaliákat; ki kell ezeket egyenlíteni az újabb kor szükségeivel ...' This was part of Kossuth's basically hostile reply to (unspecified) town representatives on that day. There is no other suggestion of a reply to Štúr. Kossuth made appeals for compulsory peasant emancipation on 3 Dec. 1847 and 6 Mar. 1848: *ibid.*, pp. 369ff., 634ff.

as in what they choose to retail from his comments on the Jewish problem.²⁰

At all events the incident was seized on when Slovak history came to be popularized. And what better scapegoat could be found than Kossuth, branded as an arch-traitor anyway to the nationality of his forebears? The diet clash became part of the whole rhetoric of the former underdogs, alleged already by the Štúrites, that Slovaks, as part of their great contribution to Hungarian civilization, had always promoted enlightenment and emancipation, whereas the benighted Magyars had brought and sustained only feudalism.²¹ Let us consider just two significant examples of the use of this episode. The first is by Milan Hodža, a leading 'young Slovak' campaigner from the turn of the century onwards — who much later was to serve as the last Czechoslovak premier before the onset of the Munich crisis. Hodža, although a nephew of one of Štúr's closest associates, operated in the spirit of T. G. Masaryk's revived Czechoslovak ideals and was therefore uneasy about the Štúrites' language reform. But he picked up in his speeches on the Kossuth-Štúr exchange, and employed it as a stick with which to beat the effete and gentrified political life, as he saw it, of Dualist Hungary. Hence, for instance, when R. W. Seton-Watson gave a lecture in Vienna on the Hungarian question early in 1909, Hodža seized the opportunity in subsequent discussion to attack Kossuth, citing the slogan 'The people are destined to suffer' ['Fátum ľudu je trpet'] as if it encapsulated the essence of his philosophy. Besides probably nonplussing the guest speaker, Hodža's intervention elicited a reproof from the liberal Austrian historian, Heinrich Friedjung, who was certainly no Magyarophile.²²

The second case is that of Vladimír (Vlado) Clementis, another seminal figure in modern Slovak identity-creation. Clementis was a left-wing patriot, active in the Second World War emigration, and subsequently foreign minister, who then fell foul of Stalinism and became the prime Slovak victim of the Slánský trial. From his schooldays at Skalica/Szakolca in the last years of Austria-Hungary, he had been a foe to the

20 Goláň, *Štúrovské pokolenie*, p. 157, cites a diet speech of 21 January 1848, defending the exclusion of Jews from the Upper Hungarian mining towns, which seems to have disappeared from the record, e.g. from Štúr, *Kde leží naše bieda?*, or his *Reči a state*, Bratislava, 1953, or his *Dieło*. Vol.I: *Politické state a prejav*, Bratislava, 1954.

21 Forceful and — within the Slovak tradition — persuasive presentations of these claims by Štúr himself (titles above, n.4) and above all in M. M. Hodža, *Der Slowak: Beiträge zur Beleuchtung der slawischen Frage in Ungarn*, Prague, 1848, a highly-charged product of the revolutionary year.

22 Milan Hodža, *Články, reči, štúdie*, 5 vols, Prague, 1930–33, iii, pp. 24–26, 158f.

Magyar gentry. As a Czechoslovak publicist in London, Clementis picked up on the Kossuth–Štúr episode in a lecture of 1943 which formed the basis for an influential pamphlet on his people's historical relationship with the Magyars, both in Slovak and in English translation.²³ The exchange lives on in modern texts for a wider audience, as in Hučko's standard illustrated life of Štúr — and the most dilettante enquirer now has immediate access to the whole of his diet speeches on a sophisticated Ľudovít Štúr website.²⁴

The broader thesis about 1848 advanced by Clementis, and already adumbrated by Hodža, held that the Štúrites were — as they themselves had affirmed — the only true progressives, whereas the Magyars under Kossuth were solely responsible for the failure of the revolution. Professional historians had already begun to fight out this claim during the 1920s and 1930s, notably in the confrontation between Daniel Rapant and Lajos Steier, a battle of giants, since both possessed an intimate knowledge of the period and impressive critical acumen. Rapant's many-volumed exoneration of the Štúrites was backed up by the Czech expert in the field, Josef Macůrek, who accused Kossuth of seeking liberalism only for the nobles and hesitating to extend civil and political rights to the rest of the populace, especially if they were ignorant of Magyar, then of becoming a radical chauvinist during 1848–49, and finally of making no concessions to the Slovaks even in emigration.²⁵

The reverberations of the issues persisted after 1945. At this juncture Hungarian–Slovak relations reached their nadir, with the attempt at forced transfer of the respective minority populations. The Marxist historians who now came to the fore were committed to some sort of rapprochement under the new Soviet aegis. Yet they showed themselves better at pointing in a vague way to common progressive traditions and jointly condemning their 'bourgeois' predecessors than at severally overcoming the latter's prejudices in relation to 1848–49.²⁶ Each side continued to assert its own revolutionary bona fides, and castigated the other for remaining feudal, in the Magyar case, or for pacting with feudalists across the border, in the Slovak. The Hungarian historian Endre Arató did most

23 Vladimír Clementis, *Medzi námi a maďarmi*, London, 1943; trans., by R. Auty, as *The Czechoslovak–Magyar Relationship*, London, 1943, pp. 33–51, esp. 43.

24 Hučko, *Život ... Štúra*, pp. 148–56; <http://www.stur.host.sk>.

25 Rapant, esp. *Slovenské povstanie*; Steier, esp. *Nemzetiségi kérdés*; Macůrek, *Dějiny maďarů a uherského státu*, pp. 238f., 246ff., 251–53.

26 Endre Kovács and Jan Novotný, *Magyar-cséh történelmi kapcsolatok*, Budapest, 1952, revised as *Maďári a my: z dějin maďarsko-československých vztahů*, Prague, 1959.

to achieve a synthesis. Born in working-class Komárno/Komárom in 1921 and well familiar with both sides of the picture (his first article treated the origins of the Slovak national movement), Arató was both a good communist and a genuine supranationalist. His attempt to argue for an inter-ethnic democratic solidarity in Hungary in 1848–49 bore too clearly the marks of the ruling ideology of his day, but it did establish a healthy critical distance from both Kossuth and Štúr.²⁷

For all the bridge-building of Arató and his like, the legacy of 1848–49 in Upper Hungary has remained a troubling one for both parties. That is evidence of the lasting significance of the revolution and its heroes for Hungarian and Slovak national self-esteem. And meanwhile scholars such as Arató found a happy ending for the Kossuth–Štúr story. According to one Czech contemporary, Kossuth took Štúr aside after his fiery speech in favour of the oppressed people, congratulated his critic, shook him by the hand, and urged him to join the common cause of breaking the power of the selfish ‘magnates’ and instituting social reform. The witness is a not unproblematical one; but he knew Štúr well, and there seems no reason to doubt that at this point there may have been reconciliation, whatever the animosities which had earlier driven Kossuth to victimize Štúr in his Bratislava lair and which later drove Štúr to take up arms against Kossuth.²⁸

27 Arató, *Egykorú demokratikus nézetek az 1848–9 évi magyarországi forradalomról és ellenforradalomról*, Budapest, 1971. See id., *A nemzetiségi kérdés története Magyarországon, 1790–1848*, 2 vols, Budapest, 1960, i, pp. 229–55, ii, pp. 113–62, for a balanced left-wing appraisal of the Slovak movement; Arató’s discursive bibliographies here (i, pp. 297–401, ii, pp. 223–96, *passim*) are rich sources for the whole historiography of the subject. Much the same material is recycled in the *op.posth.* by Arató, *A magyarországi nemzetiségek nemzeti ideológiája*, Budapest, 1983, pp. 44–54, 71–84, 138ff. *passim*; cf. *ibid.*, pp. 286–92, for a tribute to him by Emil Niederhauser. Contrast the much more jaundiced view of the Štúrovci presented in his *Beiträge* by the émigré Lajos Gogolák, likewise a Hungarian from Slovakia but of gentry origin.

28 Josef Václav Frič, *Paměti*, ed. K. Cvejn, 2 vols, Prague, 1957–60, i, p. 430. Kossuth’s words are rendered as: ‘Nedejte se odstrašit, naopak, pomáhejte mi v mých záměrech zlomit odpor sobecké magnaterie a přesvědčíte se, že mám rovněž vřelé srdce pro utrpení svého i vašeho lidu, jemuž jen ruku v ruce jdouce můžeme ulevit.’ The passage (first published in the 1880s) is incorporated by Arató, *Nemzetiségi kérdés*, ii, p. 146; *Magyarországi nemzetiségek*, p. 167; Hučko, *Život ... Štúra*, p. 152; and most recently in the standard work *Dejiny Slovenska*. Vol. II: 1526–1848, ed. S. Cambel, Bratislava, 1987, pp. 753f.

On a broader scale this vignette of our two parallel but incompatible protagonists illustrates the vagaries of popular history and the distortions introduced by national feeling into our record of the past. Besides the need for a hero, there is also the need for a villain to confirm the status of one's own champion. The juxtaposition of Kossuth and Štúr throws up more particular lessons, given the close interplay of the Magyar with the Slovak case — closer than with any other of Hungary's nineteenth-century national movements (and even allowing for the obvious disparity, in that Magyar affairs were always central to Slovak patriots, while the latter were usually peripheral to most Magyars).²⁹ At one level mutual confusion has always operated. Thus Slovaks are inclined to spell their bugbear's name 'Košút', whether out of ignorance or in order by this gesture to identify him as an aberrant son of their nation; while Hungarians can rarely spell Ľudovít Štúr's name correctly at all.³⁰ Misunderstanding, however, was compounded by a false sense of familiarity. Thus Slovaks have been apt to view Kossuth as a recognizably indigenous breed of conservative, and Hungarians have responded in kind in their judgment of the Štúrites.

Some real basis did exist for these preconceptions. Kossuth was nothing if he was not a liberator; yet in the two matters which most concerned the Slovak constituency he proved least liberal: over language and over peasant emancipation (given that only 20 per cent of land in Slovak areas was urbarial, and therefore redeemable in 1848).³¹ Štúr was likewise a liberator; yet he really did lapse later in his life into authentic reaction — even if that aspect, as opposed to his enforced flirtations with a two-faced Vienna, is hardly ever noticed by Hungarian commentators. And the context of Kossuth versus Štúr serves also to indicate overlaps between the two national affiliations which they represented, in the still fluid situation before and during the revolution. Thus the two Zays, father and son, illustrate the transition from territorial allegiance towards Hungary to Magyar loyalty of an ethnic kind. Some of Štúr's colleagues later became prominent Magyarones. And if Lajos was no apostate, since he had never either spoken or felt himself Slovak, it is true that a cousin of his, Ďordő (Ďurko) Kossuth, collected over 600 signatures among the gentry of Turiec/Turóc county to press the demand for Štúr's

29 A point well made by Arató, *Magyarországi nemzetiségek*, pp. 138ff.

30 They are not helped by the change in spelling of the forename from the earlier 'Ludevít'.

31 Julius Mésároš, 'K problémom zrušenia poddanstva na Slovensku. Urbariálny patent z 2. marca 1853', *Historický Časopis*, i (1953), pp. 595–633.

newspaper.³² I leave the last word on this complex love-hate relationship to Jozef Hurban, whose appreciation, already cited, of Kossuth's 'unprecedented and unheard-of attraction', depended on the 'Slovak nature emanating from his whole person'.³³

Appendix: Štúr's Career

1815: 29 Oct. born at Uhrovec/Zay-Ugróc, near Trenčín/Trencsén, son of a schoolteacher

1827: study in Györ

1829: study at Bratislava/Pozsony Lutheran gymnasium

1835: Slavonic teacher there and secretary of Spoločnosť československá (Czechoslovak Society)

1836: 24 Apr. patriots visit Devín/Dévény

1837: Spoločnosť československá banned; founds Ústav reči a literatúry československej (Institute for Czechoslovak Language and Literature)

1838: study at Halle

1840: returns to Bratislava gymnasium as acting professor of Slavonic languages and history

1841–43: edits literary journals and writes polemics, esp. *Starý a nový vek Slovákov, Beschwerden und Klagen der Slaven in Ungarn, Das 19. Jahrhundert und der Magyarismus*

1842–44: co-initiator of Slovak petition to emperor (*Prestolný prosbopis*)

1843–46: plans for language reform based on a new variety of (mainly central) Slovak, expounded in a text, *Nárečie slovenské alebo potreba písania v tomto nárečí*, and a grammar, *Nauka reči slovenskej*

1843: accused of 'betrayal of homeland' and dismissed from Bratislava gymnasium

1845: Aug.–1848 edits *Slovenské národné noviny*, first Slovak newspaper

1847: Oct. diet deputy for Zvolen/Zólyom

1848: Apr.–May in Vienna and Prague: conceives and orchestrates plans for Slav Congress; foundation of patriotic society Slovanská lípa (Slavonic Linden)

May: co-author of Slovak political programme, *Žiadosť slovenského národa*, proclaimed at Liptovský Svätý Mikuláš/Liptószentmiklós; flight to Prague

32 Magyarones: Many examples in Gogolák, *Beiträge, passim*; cf. Steier, *Nemzetiségi kérdés*, i. pp. 17ff., and id., *Beniczky Lajos ... visszaemlékezései és jelentései*, Budapest, 1927. Ďord Štúr: Vyvíjalová, *Slovenskje národňje novini*, pp. 83f., 86, 103f., 120, 172f., 247f.

33 '... príroda slovenská žiariaca z celej osobnosti kossuthovej mala nebývalú, neslýchanú prít'ažlivost'. Kossuth byl fenomenálny zjav, každá čiarka a črta na ňom bola mužská krása': Hurban, *Ludovít Štúr*, p. 284; emphasis mine.

June: Slav Congress in Prague; flight to Zagreb

Sept: founds Slovak National Council (Slovenská národná rada) in Vienna

Sept.–July 1849: joint leader of three armed incursions into Upper Hungary

1849: petitions to Vienna in Slovak cause

Nov. volunteers dissolved; returns to Uhrovec, then Modra/Modor (near Bratislava) under police surveillance

1851–3: deaths of brother, father, mother, beloved

1852–3: writes (in Czech) on Slav folklore, *O národních písničkách a pověstech plemen slovanských*

1854: writes 'Das Slawenthum und die Welt der Zukunft' (first published in Russia, 1867)

1855: Dec. injured in hunting accident at Modra

1856: 12 Jan. dies at Modra

Mirror Images: Kossuth and Jelačić in 1848–49

Alan Sked

1848 was the year in which Heaven seemed to come to earth. It brought about the ‘springtime of the peoples’, the overthrow of Prince Metternich and his system, the restoration of the republic in France, and opened up new vistas of domestic reform and international reorganization and cooperation.

Europe appeared to have become a *tabula rasa* in terms of international relations and all sorts of schemes were debated about its imminent transformation. Prince Czartoryski believed that Poland, for example, could be restored through the co-operation of France and Prussia (to be absorbed in a new German Union) in alliance with a new confederation of Hungary, the Danubian Principalities, and the South Slav states, backed by a united Italy.¹ In Germany there were hopes that the unification of Germany (including Bohemia) would enable the Germans to dominate Europe,² while the Hungarians believed that the Habsburgs, shorn of their German and Italian provinces, would come to Buda and make their Monarchy essentially a Hungarian one.³ In the meantime, the more reactionary elements in the Habsburg army and court worked towards the restoration of the old regime in alliance with Russia,⁴ while others hoped that the Monarchy might transform itself into a federation of free peoples

1 His views, of course, developed as events changed. See *inter alia* M. Kukiel, *Czartoryski and European Unity, 1770–1861*, Princeton, 1955.

2 See especially the work of Günther Wollstein, including *Das 'Grossdeutschland'. Nazionale Ziele in der bürgerlichen Revolution 1848/49*. Düsseldorf, 1977. See also Hans Feske, ‘Imperialistische Tendenzen in Deutschland vor 1866. Auswanderungen, überseeische Bestrebungen, Weltmachtträume’ in *Historisches Jahrbuch*, 97/98, 1978, pp. 336–83.

3 See István Hajnal, *A Batthyány-kormány külpolitikája*, Budapest, 1957.

4 For a discussion of the role of the so-called ‘court camarilla’, see Alan Sked, *The Decline and Fall of the Habsburg Empire, 1815–1918*, second, expanded edition, London and New York, 2001, pp. 121–36. Also E. Andics, *A Habsburgok és Romanovok szövetsége*, Budapest, 1961; E. Andics, *Das Bündnis Habsburg-Romanow*, Budapest, 1963; and Ian W. Roberts, *Nicolas I and the Russian Intervention in Hungary*, London, 1991.

with equal rights in which the Slavs would have a majority.⁵ For many months, anything seemed possible.

In this atmosphere many remarkable careers were forged. One thinks particularly of that of Louis Napoleon Bonaparte in France. However, within the Habsburg Monarchy, one imperial hero, Field Marshal Radetzky was to emerge from the debacle of 1848–49, along with two national ones, namely Kossuth and Jelačić. I have attempted to explain the role and significance of Radetzky elsewhere⁶ and would now like to further my revision of the role of Jelačić,⁷ by comparing his career in 1848 with that of Kossuth. Both, as has been said, emerged as national heroes, although both at the time were deadly enemies and seen to be such. One, Kossuth, became the darling of the international liberal world (especially after visits in 1851 and 1852 to England and the United States, where his powerful oratory in fluent, magnificent English, learned in prison in Buda, endeared him to all progressive and freedom-loving citizens), whereas Jelačić, the man who had helped suppress the Viennese and Hungarian revolutions as a general in the Habsburg army, was seen as a leading 'reactionary', the darling of the aristocratic world that celebrated the success of the counter-revolution.⁸ And yet ... If one looks at both men dispassionately and objectively, both turn out to be glorious,

5 See Andreas Moritsch (ed.), *Der Austroslavismus. Ein verfrühtes Konzept zur politischen Neugestaltung Mitteleuropas*. Vienna, Cologne and Wiemar, 1996.

6 See Alan Sked, *The Survival of the Habsburg Empire. Radetzky, the Imperial Army and the Class War, 1848*, London and New York, 1979.

7 See Alan Sked, 'Jelačić in the Summer of 1848', *Südost-Forschungen*, 57, 1998, pp. 129–64.

8 Hungarian historians cannot shake off this view. Gy. Spira for example refers to him as 'the savagely *reactionary* Josip Jelačić ... bound to the Hungarian crown in *feudal* allegiance ...' See Gy. Spira, *A Hungarian Count in the Revolution of 1848*, Budapest, 1974, p. 66. More recently Erzsébet Fábián-Kiss has written: 'Jelačić was an *obedient tool* of the court; he exploited the Croat nationalist movement ...' See E. Fábián-Kiss (ed.) *Die Ungarischen Ministerratsprotokolle aus den Jahren 1848–1849*, Budapest, 1998, p. 93, ft. 13. (Henceforth referred to as '*Hungarian cabinet minutes*.') Astonishingly, Hungarian historians continue to make such charges, despite the ban's abolition of feudalism and his dismissal for disobedience; despite the fact, too, that Jelačić could tell his troops in September 1848: 'Since my appointment as ban I have received twenty-one letters from the Kaiser which it grieved me not to be able to obey. His Majesty has approved my work at last; but, if he sends me twenty-one more commands to turn my course, I cannot do it. I must work for His Majesty even against his will.' (Quoted in Sked, *Jelačić in the Summer of 1848*, p. 129.) Indeed, Pulcszky argues in his memoirs that the court put Lamberg in charge of Hungary at the end of September 1848 precisely because if Jelačić had conquered Buda, he would have become a political problem for it: '... he had got used to disregarding royal orders.' Franz Pulcszky, *Meine Zeit, Mein Leben*, 4 vols, Pressburg and Leipzig, 1881, vol. 2, *Während der Revolution*, pp. 204–05. (Henceforth '*Pulcszky Memoirs*'.)

charismatic failures, frustrated national leaders who were defeated by Habsburg intrigue and duplicity. They had much more in common even than that. If the Archduke Joseph, Palatine of Hungary, could warn his brother, the Archduke Ludwig, on 1 December 1842 that the Illyrian leader, Gaj, was 'the Croatian Kossuth',⁹ he would have been nearer the truth had he made that remark about Jelačić. Yet his letter succeeded in reaching the heart of the matter:¹⁰

A career of 47 [!] years in public life, particularly in a country, which is ruled constitutionally and in which all matters are discussed publicly, gives me the right to assume that I have enough experience in such things to know that in troubled times most people pursue the same aims in the same way with the same means. From this I draw the conclusion that the Illyrian Tendency, Illyrism, is closely related to Ultra-Magyarism, that Gaj can justifiably be called the Croatian Kossuth, that they are travelling the same route, aiming to promote their cause by the same means ... and I would not be surprised if, in the middle of the confusion arising in Croatia, that at the next diet, Kossuth and Gaj did not attach themselves to another tendency, namely promoting ultra-liberalism. This is my view, in this, to my mind, very important matter ...

The Archduke was absolutely right about one thing. Illyrism and Ultra-Magyarism by 1848 would be led by two liberals. He was wrong, however, in thinking that these leaders would be allies.

For the sake of clarity, let us list the qualities shared by both men, before discussing them in detail.¹¹ Both were highly talented, multi-lingual, charismatic national leaders of about the same age.¹² Both were idealists. Both were liberals. Both were monarchists. Both were willing, however, to ignore and defy the court when necessary; both were accused of extremism by their political enemies as a result. Both had to build up armies for their national defence, since each expected to be attacked by the other. Both were, therefore, desperate for money. Both were to a certain extent prisoners of their local national public opinion, which adored them, but which both had to defy or mollify over the issue of sending troops to Italy to reinforce Field Marshal Radetzky's army there. Both faced the problem of emancipating the serfs and both had to formulate a 'nationality' policy. One had to bring about (or rather, restore) the

9 For key documents on the Croat Question with a long historical introduction see Gyula Miskolczy (ed.) *A horvát kérdés története és irományai a rendi állam korában*, 2 vols, Budapest, 1927–28. For the above quote see vol. 2., p. 22. Archduke Joseph to Archduke Ludwig, Buda, 1 December 1842.

10 *Ibid.*

11 Evidence for the assertions in this paragraph will be adduced below.

12 Jelačić was born on 16 October 1801; Kossuth on 19 September 1802.

union of Transylvania and Hungary, while the other had to bring about (or rather, restore) the union of Croatia-Slavonia and Dalmatia. In some respects, they adopted the same nationality policy. Both had military rivals to deal with, although both would have preferred to settle their problems by peaceful means rather than through war. Both had been appointed (and reappointed) to office in extraordinary circumstances. Both, as a result, felt it necessary to be careful not to be seen to break the law at key periods, although both — significantly — were willing as a last resort to gamble on military success. Both probably saved the Habsburg dynasty at least once, although both were double-crossed by the Habsburgs at least twice. In the end the dynasty succeeded in defeating the ideals of both men. Kossuth died a frustrated exile; Jelačić, ignored under the Bach system, died frustrated at home in 1859, ten years after the success of the counter-revolution. In so many ways, therefore, Kossuth and Jelačić led parallel lives, despite being deadly enemies.

Parallel Processes

In his chapter in this book¹³ and in his magisterial account of the role of Hungary in the nineteenth century Habsburg Monarchy in the relevant volume of the prestigious series devoted to the Monarchy by the Austrian Academy of Sciences,¹⁴ László Péter has rightly emphasized what he refers to as the *conversion* of the Hungarian constitution in 1848 from one based on the ancient dualism between crown and country (*ország*) to one based on constitutional principles of representative and accountable government, a civil society and equality of rights. Eventually the old concept of a Hungarian kingdom in which the diet and the county assemblies battled on behalf of the nobles and their historic rights against the king and compromised through agreements reached at the diets and through statements of principle incorporated in coronation oaths and royal inaugural diplomas, gave way to the idea of a Hungarian *state* in which all citizens were equal before the laws made in the National Assembly by the nation's elected representatives. In Péter's words: 'The first attempt to transform the rights of monarch and *ország* into a liberal system of laws,

13 See Chapter IV, above.

14 László Péter, 'Die Verfassungsentwicklung in Ungarn' in Helmut Rumpler and Peter Urbanitsch (eds) *Die Habsburgermonarchie, 1848–1918, Band VII/I, Verfassungsrechte, Verfassungswirklichkeit, Zentrale Räpresentativkörperschaften*, Vienna, 2000, pp. 239–540.

namely, the April Laws, represented an essentially more far-reaching conversion of the constitution than all following attempts,¹⁵ — indeed, a standard for all future Hungarian politics to the end of the Monarchy and beyond. This is not to say that he is unaware of the overwhelming dominance of the Hungarian nobility both in 1848 and after 1867 — he fully records the lack of non-noble deputies (fewer than ten) in 1848¹⁶ and knows that the nobles' stranglehold became even tighter after the Compromise of 1867 — but he insists — I think correctly — that in 1848, there was radical change. The nobles surrendered their privileges over their serfs, for example, in the most important advance taken towards a civil society in Hungary till then; the government became independent and responsible, with ministers made liable to impeachment; the franchise was extended to about a quarter of the adult male population or about six per cent of the population as a whole; all laws had to be made and countersigned by Hungarian ministers; and all the functions of the previous royal institutions and offices (the *dicasteria*) were now to be taken over by the responsible government. All these changes were incorporated in the April Laws¹⁷ of 1848 and as a result, the very discourse of Hungarian politics changed. 1848 brought in new concepts such as 'constitution', 'responsible government', 'civil society' and 'legal sovereignty'.¹⁸ By 19 April 1849, the Hungarian Declaration of Independence was employing the word 'state' three times, meaning a sovereign entity governed by a responsible ministry accountable to a legislature elected by the people. It also claimed for it the same 'natural rights' as all the other states of Europe and the civilized world. In the eighteenth century, on the other hand, the 'state' had simply meant a number of royal institutions with historic rights — in fact, the crown — and was seen to be separate from the *ország*, which had its own rights.¹⁹

15 Péter, *op. cit.*, p. 277.

16 'The contrast with the social composition of the Reichstag in Vienna in 1848 is astonishing:' Péter, *op. cit.*, p. 280, ft. 177. On pp. 240–41 he also explains that after 1867 Hungarian political life became merely a continuation of the old system whereby the nobles — now as a parliamentary oligarchy — continued the ancient struggle between the *ország* and crown. The point is that there are continuities and discontinuities in Hungarian constitutional history in the nineteenth century, with 1848 representing the greatest discontinuity.

17 For an English version of these, see Appendices 16 and 27 of Vol. II of William H. Stiles, *Austria in 1848–49*, 2 vols, New York, 1852. Stiles was the US chargé d'affaires in Vienna during the revolutions.

18 Péter, *op. cit.*, p. 240.

19 Péter, *op. cit.*, pp. 292–94.

It is in his discussion of these April Laws, however, that Péter becomes curiously defensive. He writes: ‘The process of drawing up the April Laws undoubtedly demonstrates too hasty a procedure. Yet ... the criticism, that they had their role in the conflict, also partly fails ... the April Laws — so far as this was possible in 1848 — created a coherent system of government.’ To be frank, Péter is extremely protective about the Hungarian record in 1848 — ‘1848 remains holy ground; the attitude taken towards the April Laws by academics has been correspondingly respectful’²⁰ — leading him to state opinions like the following:²¹ ‘It also cannot be forgotten that the Batthyány government maintained political stability in Pest for almost half a year. How many other governments that came to power through the revolutionary movement in the spring of 1848 could endure for so long elsewhere?’

Péter attributes the endurance of the government to the political experience and cooperation of Hungarian cabinet members, who overcame their political differences,²² although a truer explanation might focus on the Habsburg desire to keep Hungarian affairs on the backburner until the Italian war was won. In any case, he fails to realize that the answer to his rhetorical question is simply ‘Croatia’.

Péter’s account of Croatia’s place in events in 1848 is less than generous. He quotes the *alispán* of Bihar county’s (János Beöthy’s) statement of 14 July 1784 referring to Hungary, Croatia-Slavonia and Transylvania, that ‘these three countries possess the same freedoms under a single crown’ as well as Croatia’s 1791 version of Hungary’s Law X of 1790, claiming independence (*‘propriam habuerint consistentiam’*) but adds: ‘In fact, it (Croatia) had (centuries before) united with Hungary on condition that this status must be maintained. (*erhalten bleiben müsse.*)’²³

20 Péter, *op. cit.*, p. 277. Those who attended the Kossuth conference will remember that I had to gently chide him for ‘greater Magyar chauvinism’.

21 Péter, *op. cit.*, p. 286.

22 *Ibid.*, footnote 197.

23 Péter, *op. cit.*, p. 261. Hungary’s famous Law X of 1790 on which all was staked in 1848 read: ‘... Hungary remains with her neighbouring territories, however, with regard to her entire lawful form of government, including her *dicasteria*, a free and independent kingdom, subject to no other kingdom or people, but possessing her own status and own constitution and shall therefore be ruled and governed by her lawfully crowned hereditary king ... in agreement with her own laws and traditional rights and not according to the norms of other lands.’ The Croat diet or Sabor in 1791 made the same claim for Croatia and the Transylvanian diet did the same for Transylvania. (See Péter, *op. cit.*, pp. 260–61.) He is even less generous about the Serbs of the Vojvodina, whose claims to autonomy he dismisses on the grounds (p. 285, ft. 194) that ‘scarcely a third of the population spoke Serbian [sic].’ On the other hand, he admits (p. 263) that fewer

Péter admits, however, that the Hungarian diet sought to 'majoritize' the Croat 'minority' in the 1840s over the language issue and 'the central question over the language issue was the position of Croatia as such. In December 1847 the then opposition leader, Kossuth, called the existence of Croatia into question.'²⁴

Certainly the April Laws of 1848 were designed to apply to Croatia-Slavonia as part of a single, liberal state. Deputies were to be elected to the new Hungarian parliament even from the Croatian Military Frontier. Since the granting of civil rights to all Croatians under the April Laws was meant to make them equal citizens with Hungarians, there was no need for them to have a separate government or parliament. Transylvania, likewise, would be incorporated into the new, liberal, united Hungary. The issue of Croatia (or Transylvania) being a separate country was ignored.²⁵ The new press law (article 18) made 'agitation' against 'the inviolable unity of the state in the territory of the holy Hungarian crown' ('*tökéletes álladalmi egység*') a punishable offence.²⁶ Jelačić's reply to such claims was simply a blank refusal to have anything to do with the April Laws or the new government that had been created by them.²⁷ Indeed, as early as 1 April 1848 — even before the April Laws had been agreed by the monarch — Vienna was

than 40% of the population of Hungary spoke Hungarian! The Croat historian, Nikša Stančić, in his article, 'Das Jahr 1848 in Kroatien: unvollendete Revolution und nationale Integration', *Siidost-Forschungen*, 58, (1998), pp. 103–28, p. 124, states that the Serbs were a majority in the Vojvodina.

24 Péter, *op. cit.*, p. 265.

25 Technically a 'provincial assembly' would have been granted to a reduced Civil Croatia, shorn of Rijeka, Osijek, the Military Border, and the three Slavonian counties. It would have been controlled however by a pro-Magyar majority — the 1845 court decree banning personal votes for the Turopolje nobles was overturned — and a pro-Magyar Ban was expected to be appointed. See Stančić, *op. cit.*, p. 115.

26 Péter, *op. cit.*, p. 284.

27 '[The April Laws] had completely abolished traditional Croatian autonomy. Thus Jelačić regarded the constitutional link with Hungary as *de facto* at an end.' See Mirjana Gross, 'Die Landtage der Ungarische Krone. A. Der kroatische Sabor (Landtag)', in Rumpler and Urbanitsch (eds), *op. cit.*, VII/2, pp. 2283–2316, p. 2286. Jelačić declared the union with Hungary dissolved by proclamation on 19 April 1848, a decision that was confirmed by the Sabor on 5 June. See Iskra Iveljić, 'Stiefkinder Österreichs': Die Kroaten und der Austroslavismus', in Moritsch (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 125–37, p. 126. All officials were told to have nothing to do with the Hungarian government or its supporters on pain of court martial. (See *Hungarian cabinet minutes*, 1 May 1848.) It is slightly unclear whether the Hungarians recognized Jelačić as Ban at first. Certainly their cabinet minutes refer to him as such but at their first cabinet meeting it was reported that 'so long as his authority and official duties were not recognized', the Ban would not consent to meet the Palatine. The main concern of

receiving reports of ‘an uncommon reaction in Croatia among Illyrians, Croats and Slavonians against the Hungarian nation ...’²⁸ The commanding general of the Slavonian General Command, as early as 7 May, wrote to the War Minister of ‘the ruling bitterness among the Slav people here against the Hungarians ... and their loud and openly repeated intention under no circumstances to be subordinated to the royal Hungarian ministry,’²⁹ while Jelačić was equally blunt in his reports. On one occasion he wrote: ‘The Land of Croatia and the whole Military Border will never submit to the Hungarian Ministry under any conditions’;³⁰ and on another:³¹ ‘It is an undeniable fact that these border regiments will not recognize the Hungarian ministry under any circumstances and that I — *even if I wanted to* — could not subordinate myself to this ministry.’ Clearly, therefore, Croats wanted to make their own laws.

Péter seems to be oblivious of the fact that Croatian and other historians³² have recorded the ‘conversion’ of the Croat constitution in

the cabinet at this point seems to have been to ensure that the Croat Sabor was not convened. (See *Hungarian cabinet minutes*, 12 April 1848.) Curiously, though, when the cabinet agreed to request the Ban ‘in an appropriate manner’ to meet with it in Pest, it wrote to him in Latin, no longer the official language of Croatia. (*Hungarian cabinet minutes*, 19 April 1848.) On the other hand, it agreed on 20 April that the language of education in Croatia should be Croat, since ‘at the Zagreb Academy one professor had already begun to teach in Croat.’ (*Hungarian cabinet minutes*, 20 April 1848.) Then on 1 May it was decided by the cabinet that ‘correspondence with the Croatian authorities will be in Latin, that laws will be sent in Hungarian and Latin with an enclosed Croat translation, and that correspondence with the so-called Slavonian counties will be conducted in Hungarian.’ (*Hungarian cabinet minutes*, 1 May 1848).

28 Vienna, Kriegsarchiv, MK (1848) 54. Report from the Gradiskaner regiment to the War Minister.

29 Vienna, Kriegsarchiv, MK (1848) 2277, FML Hrabrovszky to War Minister Latour, 7 May 1848.

30 Vienna, Kriegsarchiv, MK (1848) 4526, Jelačić to Latour, 21 August, 1848.

31 Vienna, Kriegsarchiv, MK (1848) 4123, Jelačić to Latour, 8 August, 1848.

32 See for example, the works of Gross, Iveljić and Stančić above; also Wolfgang Kessler, *Kultur und Gesellschaft in Kroatien und Slavonien in der ersten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts*, Munich 1981; Wolf-Dieter Behschnitt, *Nationalismus bei Serben und Kroaten, 1830–1914. Analyse und Typologie der nationalen Ideologie*, Munich, 1980; Elinor Murray Despalatović, ‘Ljudevit Gaj and the Illyrian Movement’, *East European Monographs*, XII, New York and London, 1975; and Wayne S. Vucinich, ‘Croatian Illyrism: Its Background and Genesis’, in Stanley B. Winters and Joseph Held (eds.), *Intellectual and Social Developments in the Habsburg Empire from Maria Theresa to World War I. Essays Dedicated to Robert A. Kann*. *East European Monographs* XI, New York and London, 1975, pp. 55–113.

1848, just as he has recorded the 'conversion' of the Hungarian one. There were indeed more obstacles to this process in Croatia — a unicameral diet, greater aristocratic interest in the Hungarian Upper House, the subordination of the Croatian royal council to the Hungarian Palatine's council in 1779, the surrender to the Hungarian diet of the Croatian diet's right to approve taxation — yet, due largely to the reaction against Hungarian attempts to impose Magyar on the country as its official language, the Croats, arguing that historically theirs was not a conquered kingdom but one that had reached a mutual agreement with the Hungarian crown, succeeded in resisting the imposition of Magyar until in 1847 the diet voted unanimously to replace Latin by Croatian as the official tongue. In the course of this political struggle, the nobles also agreed that the country needed to be modernized and became willing to abolish feudal dues, albeit not in the way the Hungarian reformers were demanding. This resistance on the part of the Croats was supported by the court in Vienna, which in 1845 issued a decree banning the Turopolje peasant nobles, who were pro-Magyar, from exercising a personal vote in the Sabor. Then³³ '... the group that supported social change on the basis of a moderate liberal programme achieved the upper hand in both the Croat national movement and the diet of 1848, something which had not happened during the pre-March period.' A national assembly met on 25 March at Zagreb and drew up a petition of 30 points which represented 'the demands of the nation' and which included: freedom of the press, conscience, speech and learning; freedom to associate, assemble and petition; the representation of the people on the basis of equality without reference to rank in the forthcoming elections to the diet; equality of all before the law; freedom from feudal services etc. etc., And all these demands were met in 1848 either spontaneously, or through the acts of the ban or the diet.

Jelačić summoned the diet which met on 5 June. The counties, the free cities, the border regiments, some market towns, the cathedral chapters and consistories (Catholic and Orthodox) elected deputies directly, whereas in the countryside they were elected indirectly through electors chosen by the oldest male members of households. The franchise was restricted by property, tax, and educational qualifications, so that the vote — which was cast publicly — was restricted to about 2.5 per cent of the population. Former dignitaries (*Virilisten*) continued to attend at the personal invitation of the ban, although most of Croatia's high aristocrats,

33 Stančić, *op.cit.*, p. 107.

who were pro-Magyar, had fled to Hungary.³⁴ In any case, the diet which now termed itself a parliament or Reichstag (*déržavni sabor*) remained a unicameral assembly.

What took place in Croatia in 1848 was undoubtedly 'the conversion of the constitution'. In the words of Iveljić:³⁵ 'It has to be stressed that in 1848 the old feudal concept of Croatian constitutional law slowly disintegrated and took on a new meaning: the struggle to be a modern, national state of its own.' Croatian Liberals, in keeping with their desire to reorder the Monarchy, formulated a modernization programme for all aspects of society and the task of implementing this was given to the Ban's Council, a provisional Croat ministry, not approved by the ruler, that was active between May 1848 and June 1850 — much longer, therefore, than Batthyány's government. Its structure — departments of home affairs, culture and education, war, finance, the economy, justice etc — also demonstrated the division of autonomous and common affairs.³⁶ Its programme included the establishment of the principle of equality of all citizens (abolition of tax privileges for the nobility and clergy); the creation of a modern administrative apparatus (the abolition of the traditional autonomy of the counties); the modernization of education; the establishment of a modern Croatian *Landwehr*; the stimulation of the economy through the building of commercial roads, the regulation of waterways, the abolition of custom barriers, and the creation of a new tax system. It proved difficult to implement it in full, given splits in the ban's council, opposition from Budapest and Vienna, the war in Italy and then with Hungary, and resistance from the old order, yet much was achieved.³⁷ Feudal dues were certainly abolished with the state undertaking to compensate landlords, while in some respects the Croatian diet went further than the Hungarian one.³⁸ Croatian peasants were given the traditional *jura regalia minora*, namely the rights to hunt, shoot, fish and butcher meat and to run taverns in the summer; they were also given the right to own or use mills of any kind. Disputes about vineyards and common pastures, however, remained.³⁹

As in Hungary a new vocabulary emerged from all this political activity and change. Liberals talked of 'freedom', 'equality', 'the nation', 'reforms',

³⁴ On this topic the classic article is Vladimir Košćak, 'Madžaronska emigracija 1848', *Historijski Zbornik*, 3, (1950), pp. 39–124.

³⁵ *Op. cit.*, p. 128.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Iveljić, *op. cit.*, pp. 128–29.

³⁸ Stančić, *op. cit.*, p. 110.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

‘self-consciousness’, ‘a new era’, ‘the spirit of the people’ and condemned the ‘chains’ of ‘privilege’ and the ‘lethargic sleep’ of ‘absolutism’. The ‘final act’ of the old diet proclaimed to the world — before Hungary’s Declaration of Independence — that Croatia had historic and natural rights to unity and independence.⁴⁰ In 1848, therefore, parallel processes of constitutional conversion produced two leaders whose careers would be extremely similar.

Similar Types?

Kossuth⁴¹ and Jelačić⁴² were born less than a year apart⁴³ into noble but not wealthy families. Both were highly intelligent, artistically inclined, and musical; Kossuth played the flute, Jelačić the piano. Kossuth wrote plays, one of which was performed in Pest — and attempted to write history — while Jelačić published poetry. Both were to develop an interest in politics. Kossuth would be imprisoned for publishing the records of the Hungarian county assemblies, while Jelačić was kept under observation by the secret police for his contacts with the Illyrian movement, including the formation of an officers’ branch within Count Drasković’s ‘Croatian-Slavonian Economic League’. The result was that the commanding general in Croatia was ordered by the Court War Council ‘to put an end immediately to the political agitation of lieutenant-colonel Jelačić’.⁴⁴ Both had a reputation as handsome young men for enjoying life — partying, gambling, drinking — and both were said to enjoy the attentions of the opposite sex. However, while this may not have been true of Kossuth — according to one most distinguished historian,⁴⁵ ‘he had little

40 Stančić, *op. cit.*, p. 120.

41 For Kossuth’s personal background see, Istvan Deak, *The Lawful Revolution. Louis Kossuth and the Hungarians*, New York, 1979, pp. 9–24.

42 For Jelačić, see M. Hartley, *The Man Who Saved Austria. Baron Jellačić*, London, 1912; Ernest Bauer, *Josef Graf Jellachich de Buzim, Banus von Croatiens, Schicksal und Legende des kroatischen Helden von 1848*, Vienna and Munich, 1975; and Walter Görlitz, *Jelačić, Symbol für Kroatien, Die Biographie*, Vienna and Munich, 1992.

43 See footnote 11 above.

44 Bauer, *op. cit.*, pp. 40–41.

45 Deak, *op. cit.*, p. 24. He writes: ‘Nor does it seem that Kossuth ever spent time on women. The rumor linking him with the beautiful countess in Zemplén was probably only a rumor. Kossuth was later to marry a penniless, hard-working and passionately dedicated woman. No one knew anything concrete about Kossuth’s intimate life in 1832 or later. The only reasonable explanation for this is that Kossuth had little intimate life. He was wrapped up in politics.’

intimate life', being 'wrapped up in politics' instead — Jelačić remained an object of attraction to the ladies right up to, and especially during, 1848. The description of him in the memoirs of the Serb military leader, Stratimirović demonstrates this:⁴⁶ 'Once he had restored law and order in Vienna along with Prince Alfred Windischgraetz, he was enveloped by the ladies of the court aristocracy in the fullest sense of the word ... Although already 48 years old, Jelačić was still a handsome man, so that a few of the many countesses got it into their heads to take him to the altar. A most obliging character, Jelačić could not resist the wave of sympathy and married the eighteen-year-old Countess Sophie Stockau.' Others, however, argue that before 1848, Jelačić was too interested in his regiment to have anything to do with women, and was therefore like just like Kossuth — 'wrapped up' in his professional affairs.⁴⁷ In one other respect, however, they were certainly very alike. Both were brilliant linguists. Kossuth learned Greek, Latin (in which he could make speeches) and French at school. At home he was bilingual in Hungarian and German (his mother was of German stock) and also spoke Slovak. In jail he famously taught himself to speak 'perfect' English. Jelačić, for his part, was also excellent at languages. His regimental commander, the very difficult Colonel Kempen, later Franz Joseph's Police Minister, reported of him in 1847:⁴⁸ 'Colonel Joseph Baron Jellachich speaks and writes good German, Croat, French and Hungarian, relatively good Italian and Latin.' Everyone else thought his Italian was fluent. Both men therefore were extremely alike in age and character. Sadly, however, in one way the ban was different from Kossuth. The latter enjoyed robust health and lived into his nineties. Jelačić, on the other hand, suffered all his life from a chronic disease of the respiratory system, which was variously described as 'spasm of the stomach', 'epilepsy', 'a nervous condition' or 'phthisis', the symptoms of which included inability to sleep, nervous exhaustion, and severe hiccups. It especially affected his throat and lungs.

46 General Georg von Stratimirović, *Was Ich Erlebte. Erinnerungen von ihm selbst aufgezeichnet u. hrsg. von seiner Tochter Ljuba von Stratimirović*, Vienna and Leipzig, 1911, p. 62. Hartley, *op. cit.*, p. 33, writes on the other hand: 'Like most men whose physical energy is tremendous and who love the open air and then work they have to do, Jellačić found little time for the boudoir side of life. He did not shun women; indeed, he liked their society and was never at a loss for words in their company. But simply, where was the time for love affairs while the regiment filled his heart and head? He could make compliments and turn a verse to a pretty girl with the best, but no passion stirred him during these early years ...'

47 See the quote from Hartley in footnote 46

48 Bauer, *op.cit.*, pp. 44–45.

and took him out of active military service for two years during the mid-1820s when it was thought he would die;⁴⁹ later on he developed a brain disease that killed him at the age of only fifty-eight.

Both men were clearly ambitious and charismatic. Kossuth's ambition of course drove a political career that was sustained by his superb oratory and he may well have been the greatest political speaker of the nineteenth century.⁵⁰ In Hungary the Batthyány government employed him in its defence in Parliament at its most critical moments (especially over the Italian war), while in England and the USA political audiences were amazed at the power of his rhetoric and his flawless English.⁵¹ According to one English devotee of the political platform:⁵² 'Neither Bright nor Gladstone had then attained like ascendancy on the platform ...' Another writer who was present at a speech delivered by Kossuth in Birmingham wrote:⁵³ '... we have listened also to most of the great orators of the last thirty years; and nothing which we ever heard or read — the most fervent from Dr. Chalmers, the most elaborate from Lord Brougham, the most neat and finished from Lord Lyndurst, the most pointed and poetical from Canning, the most rounded and impressive from the late Lord Grey, the most terse from Cobden, the most sparkling from W.(sic)J. Fox — ever approached so effectually impressive as the oratory of Kossuth.' An American described his charisma before an audience as encompassing a 'highly prepossessing' personal appearance, twinkling blue eyes, great dignity and an apparent insight into the future. He continued:⁵⁴

He uses no rhetorical flourishes to arrest attention — he never appeals to the prejudices of classes in society. He offers no golden Utopia to the suffering poor, and makes no assaults on the rich. He is simple grave and deliberate ...

49 Hartley, *op. cit.*, p. 34, quotes a fellow officer: 'We who saw him lying there, calm and cheerful, with death by suffocation before him at any moment, knew that he was no ordinary man.' This stoicism in the face of a probably early death, added to his legend in the Military Border.

50 Edward Crankshaw's description of him as an 'unprincipled demagogue' hardly does him justice. See E. Crankshaw, *The Fall of the House of Habsburg*, London, 1964, p. 31.

51 See Tibor Frank's chapter in this book.

52 G. J. Holyoake, *60 Years of an Agitator's Life*, London, 1893, vol. 2, p. 258. For a good survey of Kossuth's speeches and writings in Britain see, É. H. Haraszti, *Kossuth, Hungarian Patriot in Britain*, Budapest and London, 1994.

53 P. C. Headley, *The Life of Louis Kossuth, Governor of Hungary, Including Notices of the Men and Scenes of the Hungarian Revolution to which is added an Appendix containing His Principal Speeches etc with an Introduction by Horace Greeley*, New York, 1852, pp. 306–07.

54 Headley, *op. cit.*, pp. 301–02.

He stands calmly, and with the sublime dignity of true greatness, and utters truth.

Perhaps his secret was to tell his listeners what they wanted to hear of the triumph of tyranny and the misdeeds of Austria and Russia. Certainly, he knew how to play his audiences and in Edinburgh, on one occasion,⁵⁵ he quoted Robert the Bruce to the Scots, on another, Rabbie Burns.⁵⁶ In one of his brilliant, moving speeches in America, he recollected the debate in the Hungarian parliament when he had called for the recruitment of 200,000 men to defend Hungarian independence and told his audience how his request had been granted with cries of 'liberty or death', a response which had reduced him to silence:⁵⁷ 'A burning tear fell from my eyes, a sigh of adoration to the Almighty Lord fluttered on my lips; and bowing low before the majesty of my people, as I bow before you gentlemen, I left the tribunal, silently, speechless, mute.' At this very point Kossuth paused for a few moments, mute once again, before continuing as follows: 'Pardon me my emotion — the shadows of our martyrs passed before my eyes; I heard the millions of my native land once more shouting 'liberty or death.' If it was no accident that many regarded him as the greatest orator in Britain, others also held him to be the greatest orator in the United States. Indeed, in a speech to the State Legislature of Ohio, in Columbus on 6 February 1852, he declared: 'The spirit of our age is democracy — All for the people, and all by the people. Nothing about the people, without the people — that is democracy.' Since Abraham Lincoln was one of Kossuth's greatest American supporters at this time, it has been argued, with some plausibility, that Kossuth in fact had invented the famous definition of, and plea for, democracy in the Gettysburg Address — 'that government of the people, by the people, for the people shall not perish from the earth.'⁵⁸

Jelačić's charisma, on the other hand, revolved much less around his speaking ability, although Stratimirović recorded⁵⁹ that 'he was an

55 'As Robert the Bruce once said, 'In man's most high necessity oft succour dawns from Heaven.' Kossuth's lecture to the working classes of Edinburgh, *The Times*, 2 December, 1856.

56 'The rank is but the guinea's stamp/The man's the gowd for a' that.' Kossuth on the Characteristics of European Nations, *The Times*, 22 November, 1858.

57 Headley, *op. cit.*, pp. 305–06.

58 See Gy. Szabad, 'Kossuth on the Political System of the United States of America', in *Études Historiques*, I, Budapest, 1975, pp. 502–28, pp. 513–14. Szabad also argues that Kossuth's ideas may have been responsible for Seward's famous description of the US Civil War as an 'irrepressible conflict', although he admits that this is 'a very moot question'. See pp. 523–24.

59 Stratimirović, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

outstanding speaker at all ministerial conferences to which he was invited and well represented the interests of Croatia and partly also our Serbian ones.' His speeches and proclamations in 1848 certainly displayed great eloquence and without doubt inspired the Croats, while his speech in front of the imperial family at Innsbruck on 19 June 1848⁶⁰ — 'preached with the fervour of an apostle and the imagination of a poet' — reduced not merely the Archduchess Sophie and the Empress, but even grown men to tears by its eloquence. From its beginning — 'Sire, I ask your Majesty's pardon, but I wish to save the Empire — to its peroration — 'These gentlemen may live if they wish, when the Empire has fallen, but I — I cannot', it was sheer triumph. So the ban, too, was capable of using the power of words to advance his cause.

However, it was a mixture of that, his personality and military skills that won Jelačić his following and reputation. Kempen in his 1847 report had added after his assessment of Jelačić's linguistic abilities:⁶¹ 'He is activated by a sense of honour and combines in himself nobility and goodness. His quick wit makes him rather charming, yet his bearing is noble, his manner perfect. His life-style is simple and modest; he displays cheerfulness in conversation with people and is more indulgent than strict with his subordinates.' It was apparently 'the highest commendation that anyone had ever received' from Kempen.⁶² The opinion of his divisional commander, Field-Marshal Dehlen, was equally high:⁶³ 'It is a case of an excellent colonel, who displays a truly paternal feeling for the welfare of the population entrusted to him.' Yet one of his officers, Georges de Pimodan, recorded:⁶⁴ 'It is on the battlefield that one should see him, when he flings himself at the head of his battalions, and his voice is heard above the cannon thunder and cheers his men on.'

The Jelačićs had once been rich but according to family legend had lost their wealth ransoming a relative from the Turks.⁶⁵ Thereafter, the

60 Hartley, *op. cit.*, pp. 178–80.

61 See footnote 47.

62 Hartley, *op. cit.*, p. 89.

63 Bauer, *op. cit.*, p. 45. General Auersperg, commander of all forces in Croatia, thought Jelačić deserved a higher rank and greater responsibilities. Ironically, he was given Auersperg's own job once he had been created ban!

64 Hartley, *op. cit.*, pp. 180–81.

65 While researching the Haus, Hof, und Staatsarchiv in Vienna to discover whether the Habsburgs had given any personal financial aid to Jelačić during 1848, the only transaction I came across in either the 'secret cabinet fund' or the 'Habsburg-Lorraine family fund' was one entry in the latter relating to the fact that 1,700 gulden had been given to his father to equip him as a lieutenant. His mother, apparently, had been responsible for this request. The family needed the money.

family's reputation had been sustained by its record of military service to the Empire. The ban's grandfather, for example, received a large gold war medal for personal bravery from the hands of Maria Theresa herself. His father enjoyed an even more illustrious career as a general of the Napoleonic era, winning the knight's cross of the Maria Theresa Order, and in the process becoming a baron — a title bestowed on him by Francis I. He thereby also became a magnate of the kingdom of Hungary, allowing his son, as a result, to be eligible to be ban. All three of his sons entered the imperial army; all three ended up as Lieutenant Field-Marshals — or brigadier-generals.⁶⁶

The second baron — the ban — was praised for his military talents wherever he went. Radetzky said of him:⁶⁷ 'I expect the best of him, for never yet have I had a more excellent officer.' Others said much the same and, according to one friend, Baron Neustädter,⁶⁸ Jelačić, as a result, began to harbour the ambition to become ban. Since his family's name was well known and the record of its loyalty and service to the dynasty unsurpassed in the Military Border, this was not perhaps surprising. In any case, he himself became the subject of legend after 1845 when in an action in reprisal against a Turkish raid from Bosnia, he attacked the Bosnian town of Pozvizd. His success was taken as proof among the borderers that Jelačić would one day liberate Bosnia-Herzegovina from the Turks and would indeed become ban. One song sung in his honour ran:⁶⁹

A marvel, O my people see —
The Turk is gone, his power is past!
And Jellachich, our Jellachich,
Has shown the strength of Croat might
When in accord and deep affection,
Brothers join to guard the right.

By 1848, therefore, Jelačić was the unanimous choice of the Croat general assembly in Zagreb to be ban. Kossuth, in Hungary, meantime, was unanimously recognised as *the* tribune of the people there:⁷⁰ '... the nation greeted him as its Messiah ...'

66 For this background see the biographies of Jelačić listed in footnote 41.

67 Hartley, *op.cit.*, p. 68.

68 Görlitz, *op. cit.*, pp. 60–61.

69 Hartley, *op. cit.*, p. 96.

70 Pulszky, *Memoirs*, vol. 2, p. 7.

Similar Politics

It may seem heretical to point this out, but Kossuth and Jelačić were both liberals, both royalists and both wanted to reshape the structure of the Habsburg Monarchy — with or without the consent of the Emperor.

The most evident proof of Jelačić's liberalism is simply the fact that he could preside over the 'conversion' of the Croat constitution. However, the diaries of both Kempen⁷¹ and Count Egger⁷² confirm it. Kempen, who had been Jelačić's regimental colonel before 1848 was an out-and-out reactionary who was suspicious, if not jealous, of the ban after his appointment to that office and who as police minister attempted to deny him any political influence. Egger, on the other hand, was a close personal friend of the ban and the Archduke John. He had an almost father-son relationship with Juro Jelačić, one of the ban's two younger brothers, who had married the daughter of Countess Hermine Christalnigg, a close friend. Egger was a progressive who, unlike Kempen, was a great admirer of the ban's liberalism. On 7 September 1848 he wrote:⁷³ 'That Pepi's (i.e. Jelačić's — it was the pet name for the ban among his family and friends) outlook (*Gesinnung*) is liberal we know, indeed, many people know, but his name is taken by a certain party as a codeword for the military leader of the counter-revolution ...'. Egger also knew, however, that it was not merely the Magyar charges of reaction that were being employed against Jelačić. On 16 May he had written:⁷⁴ 'The Slavs of course want to unite together, but are not the Russians also Slavs? This unfortunate circumstance allows the enemies of Illyrism the excuse to use the worst calumnies and complaints.' On 23 September he was protesting:⁷⁵ 'Were there not [among the Germans — author] a fear of Czechs and Russia in the background, the newspapers would not be so silent about the way the ban has been used and to a certain extent sacrificed.' But it never ever struck Egger that the ban was other than a loyal liberal who was faithful to the Monarchy.

71 Josef Karl Mayr, (ed.), *Das Tagebuch des Polizeiministers Kempen von 1848 bis 1859*, Vienna and Leipzig, 1931. Henceforth referred to as 'Kempen's diary'.

72 Ferdinand Hauptmann (ed.), *Gedanken über Staat und Revolution. Das Tagebuch des Grafen Ferdinand Egger aus dem Jahre 1848*, Zur Kunde Südosteuropas II/6, Graz, 1976. It reads like a diary, but in fact is really Egger's almost daily correspondence with Juro Jelačić. Henceforth referred to as 'Egger's diary'.

73 Egger's diary, 7 September, 1848.

74 Egger's diary, 16 May, 1848.

75 Egger's diary, 23 September, 1848

Kempen had the same view but from a different perspective. On 9 January 1850 he recorded in his diary a question addressed to him by the new war minister:⁷⁶ ‘Count Gyulai wanted to know from me how it had actually come about that Jelačić had been demanded by the nation as ban in the days of March 1848.’ He answered:⁷⁷ ‘To my knowledge only one party demanded him, the ultraliberal one, without any mandate from the nation.’ On 19 March 1848 Kempen had already been recording his fears for the future:⁷⁸ ‘I ... see everything that is holy threatened — throne, altar, property — and hope that the sinfulness of humanity will be rescued by God’s help and protection.’ Yet on the very same day Jelačić had appeared to be ‘in the highest spirits.’⁷⁹ Kempen was quite thunderstruck at his appointment as ban when the news arrived on 28 March:⁸⁰ ‘I foresee frightful things — anarchy, civil war, perhaps the fall of the entire imperial house. The selection of a ban without reference to the palatine seems to be a *coup d'état* in favour of the Slavs ... God preserve us!’ The ban’s subsequent style — open, democratic, liberal — inevitably infuriated Kempen. On 20 May he recorded:⁸¹ ‘He handles almost everything publicly, which cannot be totally approved. Letters from Vienna he reads out aloud. He receives and converses with members of delegations who have returned from Vienna.’ On 9 August he was thunderstruck again. When he protested at being kept in Croatia instead of being transferred to Italy, Jelačić told him he was needed in Croatia and that he would be kept there.⁸² He then explained that as ban ‘in practice he [Jelačić] could do what he liked.’⁸³ After the success of the counter-revolution, Kempen clashed with the ban once more over the issue of allowing the military police to enter Croatia. On 9 May 1850, Jelačić had told him that⁸⁴ ‘he would never tolerate this and would rather return his decorations.’ The ban’s liberalism was still extant and on 3 October 1851 Kempen was still

76 Kempen’s diary, 9 January 1850.

77 Ibid. Cf. the Marxist Gy. Spira, who — see footnote 8 — regards Jelačić as a feudal reactionary: ‘Nevertheless it remains a fact that the Croat liberals sanctioned the petition of March 25 and, in it, the point which pressed for Jelačić’s appointment.’ Spira, *The Nationality Issue in the Hungary of 1848–49*, Budapest, 1992, p. 34.

78 Kempen’s diary, 19 March, 1848.

79 Ibid.

80 Kempen’s diary, 28 March, 1848.

81 Kempen’s diary, 20 May 1848. Cf. Ferdinand Hauptmann, *Jelačić’s Kriegzug nach Ungarn 1848*, 2 vols, Graz, 1975 (Zur Kunde Südosteuropas, II/5), vol. 1, p. 7: ‘Jelačić by nature was used to speaking openly and not concealing his thoughts.’

82 Kempen’s diary, 9 August 1848.

83 Ibid.

84 Kempen’s diary, 9 May, 1850.

complaining:⁸⁵ 'On a visit to minister Bach we came to discuss the impossible — allowing Croatia and Slavonia to be governed by the ban. He said to ease the task would be difficult; Jelačić was still ban. But I answered that he must be taught to obey.' Both Kempen and Egger, knew the ban extremely well and agreed on all his qualities — he was a cheerful, open, honest, straightforward, politically liberal and politically disobedient Slav.

About the ban's loyalty to the Monarchy, however, there was never any doubt. He told his colleagues:⁸⁶ 'My aim is to uphold a united, strong Austria, to establish the emperor on his throne, and that we should live in equal freedom.' In a confidential memorandum which he wrote after becoming ban, he declared:⁸⁷ 'The die is cast! I follow the straight road and play the open game; if I come to an end thereby, I fall as a soldier, a patriot and a true servant of my master the emperor.' Kossuth's position, on the other hand, was less straightforward. He was the man who ejected the Habsburgs from the throne of Hungary and who in the USA in 1852 seemed to declare himself a republican. But was he really? Certainly when he was in exile he stated that⁸⁸ 'our native Hungary can find peace only in a republican form of government, but in a republican structure similar to that of the United States.' In a slightly fuller form, he said:⁸⁹

Hungary wills and wishes to be a free and independent republic founded on the rule of law, securing social order, securing person and property and the moral development as well as the material welfare of the people — in a word, a republic like that of the United States, founded on institutions inherited from England itself.

Yet these statements were made just before Kossuth's visit to the USA. When he had arrived in England, on the other hand, he had praised British institutions, telling the crowd at Southampton of 'what I take to be a most glorious sight to see — your gracious Queen representing on the throne the principle of liberty'.⁹⁰ Apparently he saw in free 'municipal institutions' (local government in England, federalism in the USA) the key to political freedom⁹¹ — an echo, no doubt of his defence of the county assemblies in Hungary in the 1840s. Consistent with this belief in

85 Kempen's diary, 3 October 1851.

86 Hartley, *op. cit.*, p. 224.

87 Hartley, *op. cit.*, p. 137.

88 Szabad, *op. cit.*, p. 521.

89 *Ibid.* ft. 103.

90 Headley, *op. cit.*, p. 240.

91 Headley, *op. cit.*, p. 237.

decentralized government, he denounced the republican form of government in France.⁹²

When in Hungary, of course, he had been a consistent monarchist. In his famous speech of 3 March 1848, demanding a constitution for all parts of the Empire, he had referred to ‘our beloved dynasty’, saying that all the peoples of the Monarchy would offer their blood and lives for it (if not for the politicians of Vienna); indeed, he had lavished praise on the young Franz Joseph as the dynasty’s hope for the future.⁹³ And one of his radical opponents wrote:⁹⁴

I know that Kossuth even in February 1848 was occupied with plans (*Berathungen*) which prove decisively, that he at that time still wished for no revolution, or at least did not believe in one. *I always found him to be in favour of monarchy, indeed of the dynasty.*

Even the Declaration of Independence that dethroned the Habsburgs did not create a republic. In fact, it describes their dethronement as ‘an act of the last necessity’ not something undertaken ‘out of revolutionary excitement.’⁹⁵ Again, in Istvan Deák’s words, in the months following the Declaration, ‘both Kossuth and prime minister Szemere attempted repeatedly to offer the crown to a foreign prince.’⁹⁶ Previously, Kossuth and Batthyány had begged the king to come to Buda from Innsbruck, where he had fled — the most fervent wish of all loyal Hungarians, as the Declaration of Independence admitted.⁹⁷

92 Szabad, *op. cit.*, p. 517.

93 Hans Schlitter, *Aus Österreichs Vormärz*, vol. 3, *Ungarn*, Zurich, Leipzig and Vienna, 1920, p. 68.

94 P. Somssich, *Das Legitime Recht Ungarns und seines Königs*, Vienna, 1850, p. 18.

95 The Declaration is translated and included as Appendix 31 by Stiles, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, pp. 409–19. For the quotations above, see p. 409.

96 Deák, *op. cit.*, p. 262.

97 See footnote 73. Cf. Péter, *op. cit.*, p. 289: ‘The Batthyány government would have liked to have seen the king come to Buda (instead of Innsbruck) and Kossuth above all clamoured vehemently for this from May. He and the radicals also played with the thought of offering the Hungarian crown to the Archduke Stephen.’ Indeed, the Hungarian cabinet on 20 May, after the King’s flight to Innsbruck on 15 May, ‘expressed its conviction that the dangers facing the country could be best avoided, if the king would take residence in this his homeland for at least a period of time and that the policy of the Monarchy as a whole were conducted according to more energetic principles.’ (*Hungarian cabinet minutes*, 20 May 1848.) The palatine promised to talk to the king about this and extracted a promise from him to come to Pest to open the parliament. This did not happen, since the king was too ill to travel and parliament had to be opened by the palatine. (*Hungarian cabinet*

It was in one of his very first speeches in England, however, that Kossuth outlined the real nature of his politics.⁹⁸ He said: 'You see then, that we in Hungary were not planning revolution. Hungary was not the soul of secret conspiracy ... No just man can charge ... that I was planning a revolution. No one will say I was a Red Republican.' The most dramatic part of his speech however was the passage that follows: 'Myself, an humble, unpretending son of modest Hungary, was in the condition that I had the existence of the house of Hapsburg and all its crowns here in my hand. (M. Kossuth here stretched out his arm with clenched fist across the table. Tremendous cheering.) I told them "Be just to my fatherland, and I will give you peace and tranquillity in Vienna." They promised to be just, and I gave them peace and tranquillity in Vienna in 24 hours; and before the Eternal God who will make responsible to Him my soul, before history, the independent judge of men and events, I have a right to say the House of Hapsburg has to thank its existence to me.' Thus in March 1848, Kossuth saved the Habsburgs.

The truth about March 1848 will be investigated presently. Here, one final point remains to be made, namely that Kossuth was certainly no socialist. Szabad, in a discussion of his views as expressed in the USA, commented in a footnote⁹⁹ on the 'characteristically liberal stance of Kossuth, who became the leader of the Hungarian fight against feudalism, but repeatedly dissociated himself from all socialist aims.' This is certainly true. For example, in Manchester in 1851 Kossuth explained:¹⁰⁰ '... the only sense which I can see in Socialism is inconsistent with social order and the security of property ... believing that ... I may be able somewhat to influence the course of the next European revolution, I think it right plainly to declare beforehand my allegiance to the great principle of security for personal property...'. Both Kossuth and Jelačić, therefore, may be taken to have been liberal monarchists. Their politics were based

minutes, 20 June 1848.) The *Hungarian cabinet minutes* of 20 May recorded a report in the newspaper *Március 15-ke* that the cabinet was to make the palatine provisional king. To ensure that this false report did not spread, this issue of the paper was banned. According to the memoirs of Wirkner, the Austrian government's main agent in Pressburg in 1848, Archduke Louis, the head of the Staatskonferenz had told him on 14 March 1848, that in case of necessity, the court would take refuge in Hungary. See C. M. Knatchbull-Hugessen, *The Political Evolution of the Hungarian Nation*, 2 vols, London 1908, vol. 2, p. 11, ft. 4.

98 *The Times*, Kossuth at Winchester, 27 October, 1851.

99 Szabad, *op. cit.*, p. 521, ft. 101.

100 E. O. S., *Hungary and Its Revolutions from the Earliest Period to the Nineteenth Century with a Memoir of Louis Kossuth*, London, 1854, pp. 516-17.

on the same sort of principles and the manner in which they oversaw the conversion of their respective constitutions was remarkably consistent.

They both wished, moreover, to reshape the Habsburg Monarchy as a whole, but here they differed in the manner in which they wanted to 'convert' the imperial constitution. Kossuth wanted to reduce the link between Hungary and Cisleithania to a mere personal union with the emperor of Austria:¹⁰¹ 'Hungary should be governed independently and be free from all foreign interference.' For Kossuth constitutional matters were the main priority. He wanted the link with (a preferably constitutional) Austria made as weak as possible leaving Hungary to enjoy the fullest independence compatible with a personal union with the Austrian emperor as king of Hungary.¹⁰² It was this belief that made him an uncomfortable leader even for Hungarian Liberals:¹⁰³ '... they knew not whether he would lead them — indeed, he himself did not know his final destination; he only knew that he would lead his fatherland in the interests of its independence to the borders of the possible, although these borders, he felt, would depend on circumstances and their exploitation.' By October 1848, therefore, he was willing to invade Austria.

Jelačić took a different stance. As Iveljić has written,¹⁰⁴

Croat policy in 1848 rested on the principles of Austroslavism, that is the conviction that the existence of the Monarchy was in the interests of Croatia — albeit on the condition that the Monarchy should be transformed into a federation of individual territories with secured historical rights on the basis of language and ethnicity.

From this point of view the alliance between Hungarian and German liberals was nothing more than a plot against all Slavs. The October revolution in Vienna especially was seen as unlawful and was considered the work of the 'pseudo-liberal Magyar-German party'.¹⁰⁵ The reasoning behind all this was outlined in a pamphlet published in Vienna in 1848 by the Croat Imbro Tkalc¹⁰⁶ which condemned the 'racial despotism' of the

101 See F. Riedl, *A History of Hungarian Literature*, London, 1906, pp. 159–62. He is quoting from one of Kossuth's speeches in England.

102 Cf. Horst Haselsteiner, 'Ungarische Nationalkonzepte, die Slaven unter "Austroslavismus"', in Moritsch (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 86–101, pp. 98–99.

103 Pulszky, *Memoirs*, vol. 2, pp. 9–10.

104 Iveljić, *op. cit.*, p. 127.

105 Ibid.

106 *Croaten, Serben und Magyaren, ihre Verhältnisse zu einander und zu Deutschland*, Vienna, 1848, published under the pseudonym E. I. Ignajtijewitsch. See Iveljić, *op. cit.*, p. 127 and 127, ft. 8.

Magyars who, under the mask of liberalism, wanted to place the other peoples of Hungary under a 'Magyar yoke'; their liberalism towards the Serbs, for example, had been demonstrated 'by fire and sword'. Croat liberals, therefore saw Jelačić as 'a liberal statesman of the new school', 'the darling of the people'.¹⁰⁷ Like them¹⁰⁸ 'the ban was also a proponent of Austroslavism. On Jelačić's invitation two Czech delegates came to the Croatian diet and Josef Miloslav Hurban made a speech on the difficult position of the Slovaks.' After the suppression of the Slav Congress in Prague in June, Zagreb became the centre of Austroslavism.

The thirty national demands of the Croats, however, had made no mention of re-shaping the Monarchy. Yet Article XI of the Croatian diet at the beginning of June 1848 with its 'Manifesto of the Croatian-Slavonian Nation' plus the pamphlet of the 'Croatian-Slavonian deputies' — who had been refused permission to enter the Austrian Reichstag — entitled 'The Croats and Slavonians to the Peoples of Austria' brought the case for federalizing the Monarchy into the open; it was adopted by all shades of opinion in the diet.¹⁰⁹ The plan was to allow for a common (federal) government to oversee common matters such as war, finance and trade. Otherwise local parliaments should be in charge. The Monarchy was to be divided into national units based on historic and natural rights and the equality of all nationalities. The South Slav peoples were to be united in a Triune Kingdom of Croatia-Slavonia-Dalmatia with links to both a Serb Vojvodina and the Slovenes. Naturally, the link with the German Confederation was to be broken.

Jelačić supported all this:¹¹⁰ '[His] negotiations with the [Hungarian] government broke down over the demand for the aforementioned common ministries and over autonomy for the Vojvodina. War was the result.' His desire had been, and still remained 'to effect an even closer federation with a constitutional empire on the basis of full equality of rights for all nationalities.'¹¹¹

107 Iveljić, *op. cit.*, p. 127.

108 Iveljić, *op. cit.*, p. 128.

109 Gross, *op. cit.*, p. 2287.

110 *Ibid.*

111 Ferdinand Hauptmann, *Das Programm des Banus Jelačić zum Umbau Österreichs im Jahre 1848*, Bericht über den vierten österreichischen Historikertag in Klagenfurt, 1956, p. 65.

Royal Appointments and *Coups d'État*

Kempen's description of Jelačić's nomination as ban as a '*coup d'état* in favour of the Slavs'¹¹² because it was made without reference to the palatine of Hungary, has something in it — but not much. Certainly, it had come about in order to counterbalance the enthusiasm of the Hungarians, yet it had come about quite legally. The Archduke Ludwig had made up his mind in favour of Jelačić in principle as early as 16 March, having been lobbied both by Baron Jósika, the head of the Transylvanian Court Chancery¹¹³ and Baron Kulmer, a Croat deputy to the Hungarian Upper House, a fervent Illyrian and a close friend of Jelačić (he was in fact five years younger than the future ban, but addressed him with the familiar *du*).¹¹⁴ Jósika, according to the memoirs of his deputy, believed that¹¹⁵ 'we require a suitable and determined leader of their (i.e. the Croats') own race, who is capable of exploiting their devotion, their military organization, and their injured racial feelings, in the interests of the Throne.' However, it was the determined intervention of the Archduke John, who, having been lobbied by Gaj, ensured that a final decision was taken and that the Staatskonferenz approved the nomination on a motion from Kolowrat on 21 March, before the Hungarians — who were proving much more difficult than foreseen — could prevent this.¹¹⁶ In any case, the palatine himself approved it reluctantly and his later — retrospective — complaint, that Batthyány had not been consulted, 'came too late and was deliberately ignored'.¹¹⁷

112 See footnote 77.

113 Who apparently had been prompted by Wirkner — see footnote 94.

114 See for example his letter of 30 March 1848 quoted by Hauptmann, *Erzherzog Johann als Vermittler zwischen Kroatien und Ungarn im Sommer 1848*, Zur Kunde Südosteuropas, II/I, Graz, 1972, p. 12, which congratulates Jelačić on his appointment as ban. The same letter, by the way, significantly adds to the evidence of the force of the Archduke John's intervention by stating 'your nomination went through in three days, despite the fact that earlier on nobody in the highest circles had thought of you.'

115 Quoted from the memoirs of L. Szögyény-Marich by Knatchbull-Hugessen, *op. cit.*, vol. 2., p. 56.

116 The best account of the nomination is Hauptmann, *Erzherzog Johann als Vermittler* etc., pp. 8–12. The archduke arrived in Vienna on 19 March, Gaj was received at court on 20 March, instructions went from the king to the Court War Council the same day to promote Jelačić to ban, the Staatskonferenz approved the decision formally on 21 March, the palatine approved it on 22 March and the king signed the appointment on 23 March.

117 Hauptmann, *Erzherzog Johann* etc., p. 12.

Count Egger received news of the appointment on 23 March and recorded:¹¹⁸ 'And how he [the Archduke John] spoke of Pepi [i.e. Jelačić] — he said that he knew no braver, more excellent man, who combined so much heart and spirit. A deputation from Agram (Zagreb) was in Graz to see him. Gaj, at its head, it seems demanded Pepi. When the Archduke came here [Vienna], he proposed it to the *Konferenz* immediately and everyone was unanimous.' The next day Egger noted:¹¹⁹ 'I can hardly tell you with what profound conviction and enthusiasm the Archduke spoke of him.'

Kolowrat, for his part, made his own motives quite clear. Afraid lest the Hungarians should 'entice the Croat-Slavonian lands by agreeing to recognize their local rights, language etc.' he feared that 'the Austrian, unfortunately heterogeneous state, would face a compact mass that might be ready to attack the dynasty.'¹²⁰ In fact, Kolowrat was wrong to suspect that the Hungarians would be able to succeed in any such manoeuvre, but the nomination was without doubt legal, as was the appointment, confirmed on 23 March in a rescript signed by the king (who obviously took precedence over the palatine) and an official of the Hungarian Court Chancery (Szögyény-Marich, the deputy chancellor).

In any case, the new Hungarian ministry was not approved until 7 April and the April Laws not until 11 April. Batthyány, it is true, had been nominated premier by the palatine on 17 March, but the Staatskonferenz at the time viewed this as illegal.¹²¹ The relevant protocol of 18 March¹²² — the day after his nomination by the palatine — declares 'that the palatine has exceeded the authority given to him with the nomination of Batthyány';¹²³ but on account of diverse factors,¹²⁴ it none the less recommends the confirmation of the nomination of Batthyány as *provisional*¹²⁵ prime minister, and that the palatine, in accordance with the powers at his

118 Egger's diary, 23 March, 1848.

119 Egger's diary, 24 March, 1848.

120 Quoted in Zoltán I. Tóth, 'The Nationality Problem in Hungary in 1848–49', *Acta Historica*, 1954, pp. 235–37, 243.

121 Péter, *op. cit.*, p. 278.

122 The key documents concerning the establishment of the responsible Hungarian ministry in 1848 can be found in Árpád Károlyi, (ed.), *Németújvári gróf Batthyány Lajos első magyar miniszterelnök főbenjáró pöre*, Budapest, 1932, 2, pp. 603–09. For the quote above see, p. 608, *Staatskonferenzprotokol*, 18 March, Vienna.

123 Author's emphasis

124 The most important of which was almost certainly fear of revolution, if the nomination were reversed. News of it had been made public and it was being celebrated in Vienna. Cf. Kossuth's boast above; for more, see below.

125 Author's emphasis

disposal, but under certain conditions and without infringing the highest authority, should entrust Batthyány with the maintenance of order and tranquillity.' On the same day, the king informed the palatine by letter¹²⁶ that this was to be the case and that the new — provisional — premier should strive to maintain order and tranquillity by working 'alongside' both the Hungarian Chancery in Vienna and the *Statthalterei* (the palatine's council in Buda) whose '*authority remains completely unaffected*'. (*ungeschmälert aufrecht erhalten werden müsse*)¹²⁷ The old order — as yet — had by no means accepted its passing. It still had every right therefore to appoint Jelačić as ban, a right which the Batthyány government apparently accepted. The real *coup*, meanwhile, was being executed by the Hungarians.

The news of the revolution in Paris caused Kossuth to make his great speech of 3 March 1848 demanding responsible government not merely for Hungary but for the Empire as a whole. This demand was incorporated into an address to the throne, which was passed unanimously by both houses of the Hungarian parliament and a delegation of parliamentarians, including Kossuth, Batthyány, and Széchenyi, was chosen to take the address from Pressburg to Vienna to present it to the king. By this time Széchenyi, Hungary's greatest conservative statesman, who had previously been Kossuth's opponent and rival, had come round to his support. The reaction of the palatine to the revolution in Vienna had demonstrated such weakness on the part of this Habsburg that Széchenyi believed that a separate, responsible Hungarian ministry could now be extracted from the dynasty. The choice was between 'reform' and 'anarchy' and the Hungarian nobles should lead the cause of reform.¹²⁸ On the voyage to Vienna, the problem was discussed how best to get the emperor to agree to make concessions and Széchenyi, famously, came up with the bright idea of transferring his powers to the palatine. As he noted in his diary, he composed a 'quite simple' draft reply to the address on behalf of the king:¹²⁹ 'Stephen is my *alter ego*.' After the arrival of the delegation in Vienna, Széchenyi agreed with Kossuth and Batthyány that the reply should also agree to the formation of a responsible ministry and

126 Károlyi (ed.), *Németújvári gróf Batthyány Lajos*, p. 609, king to palatine, handwritten letter, 18 March, Vienna.

127 Author's emphasis.

128 For Széchenyi's role during the revolution, see Gy. Spira, *op. cit.* For the above see, p. 43 and p. 45. On 15 March Széchenyi had written in his diary: 'I must support Louis Batthyány and Kossuth! — All feelings of hatred and antipathy — and even ambition, must be silenced.' Spira, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

129 Spira, *op. cit.*, p. 22; Péter, *op. cit.*, p. 278, ft. 167.

that it should designate Batthyány as premier. The revolutionary and pro-Magyar atmosphere of the imperial capital had clearly emboldened their spirits. Moreover, the palatine, whose weakness in face of the revolution on 14 March, had first encouraged Széchenyi to make common cause with Kossuth, now agreed to stake his honour and office on securing the king's acceptance of the draft reply.¹³⁰ To ensure his success, he sent a letter to the king designed to secure his compliance by frightening him out of his wits. According to the letter,¹³¹ it was 'essential' for him to agree if 'anarchy' or a 'republic' were to be 'avoided'. Hungary was on the verge of revolution and the authorities lacked the means to prevent this. The choice remained one between 'a favourable decision and the loss of the province'. He added: 'That the decision is a difficult one — the consequences not easy to avoid — I understand, but it is the *only* means — to overcome the dangers with which otherwise we will now inevitably be confronted.' He then stated, that if there were no favourable decision, he personally could not return to Pressburg. But he ended by ensuring the king — and 'expressing this quite clearly' — that if he did agree, then 'the state's link (*Staatenverband*) with Austria and its monarch would in no way be endangered.' The deputy head of the Hungarian Chancery, Szögyény-Marich, meanwhile, had drawn up a document¹³² composed in much the same spirit, justifying the Hungarian claims. This too stressed the dangers of the moment, since otherwise it admitted that the changes demanded by the diet were 'unnecessary': 'the present disturbances in Hungary will be seen as merely trifling (*gering*) compared with what will probably ensue if the means are not adopted in time to counter this agitation.' The result was that when the king met the delegation from the Hungarian diet the following afternoon (17 March), a 'painful scene' occurred, to use Széchenyi's description of it, during which the feeble-minded Ferdinand broke down and 'with his pleading hands placed together' begged the palatine 'in childish simple-mindedness' in the Viennese dialect 'I' pitt' di, nimm mir meinem Thron nit!' ('I beg you, please don't take my throne away.')¹³³

The previous evening Kossuth had understood something of the fears of the dynasty when, in an interview with the Archduke Franz Karl, the

130 Spira, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

131 Károlyi, *op. cit.*, pp. 206–07 Document 2, Palatine to King, Vienna, 16 March, 1848.

132 Árpád Károlyi, *Az 1848 — diki pozsonyi törvénycikkek az udvar előtt* (hereafter *Az 1848 tvcikkek*), Budapest, 1936, pp. 203–05, Document 1, Report of the Dietal Committee of the Hungarian Chancery on the diet's Address. 16 March, 1848.

133 Spira, *op. cit.*, p. 98.

king's brother and father of Franz Joseph, he had been told the king wished to satisfy the Hungarians but did not wish to be seen to act under duress. Kossuth replied:¹³⁴ 'If your Imperial Highness will give me your word of honour that you will do what equity and justice oblige you to do for my country, I will bring tranquillity to Vienna for the House of Austria.' The Archduke thereupon gave Kossuth his word, saying that the Habsburgs would be 'forever grateful' to him. Kossuth's boast in his Winchester speech of 1851, therefore, was not a hollow one. Everyone seemed to believe, that if Kossuth had called for a revolution in Vienna at this time, the Habsburgs could have been overthrown.

That was not to say, however, that there would be no rearguard action over the diet's proposals. Windischgraetz told Széchenyi, for example, that agreeing to the Hungarian proposals would 'entail the complete upsetting of the constitution and the Monarchy.'¹³⁵ Moreover, the Staatskonferenz only agreed to them conditionally under the threat of the palatine's resignation and the fear of revolution. Its advice to the monarch was to play for time.¹³⁶ By all means he could assent to full powers for the palatine and the establishment of a responsible 'administration' ('ministry' was only to be used if it were made 'dependent on the existing laws of the country') but since it had yet to be established to what extent such an administration would be responsible for matters such as defence and finance, the decisions taken should have an 'introductory, preparatory, not definitive character' and a 'final decision' should be left for a 'more suitable, later point in time.' The palatine should also be told to work within the constraints of the Pragmatic Sanction and confer with Vienna over appointments. The king accepted this advice and on 17 March the palatine¹³⁷ was 'invested, as my viceroy with full powers within the meaning of the law to govern in my absence the kingdom of Hungary, and the parts thereto annexed, in the path of the law and the constitution, maintaining the unity of the crown and the connexion with the empire in its integrity.' [He continued:] 'I am disposed to accede to the desire of my faithful Estates and Orders for the appointment in accordance with the laws of the country of an independent and responsible ministry, and give you at the same time authority to propose for

134 L. Kossuth, *Meine Schriften aus der Emigration*, 3 vols, Pressburg-Leipzig, 1881, vol. 2, p. 207.

135 Spira, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

136 Károlyi, *Az 1848 tucikkek*, pp. 211–14 Document 5, The advisory report of the Staatskonferenz on the Palatine's request to the King to establish an independent Hungarian ministry, Vienna, 16–18 March.

137 Printed in Knatchbull-Hugessen, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, pp. 16–17.

appointment¹³⁸ suitable persons from among those whom you have mentioned to me, also to take steps in order that suitable legislative proposals may be made by the Estates and Orders with a view to defining in an expedient manner the sphere of influence of such individuals, having regard to the close connexion, rightly to be considered of such importance, existing by virtue of the Pragmatic Sanction, between the kingdom of Hungary and my hereditary dominions, which are equally entitled to my paternal care. Such proposals, together with the other suggested laws referred to in the Address, should be laid before me by the Estates and Orders without delay.'

Having secured Kossuth's agreement to keep the peace in Vienna, the Habsburgs regained their nerve and were determined to limit the concessions to the Hungarians. It would take too long to detail the political battle over the April Laws, but two or three points should be made. The Staatskonferenz on 26 March¹³⁹ did warn the king, despite a favourable review of the laws by the Hungarian Chancery's own Committee on the diet,¹⁴⁰ that they amounted to 'a new constitution for Hungary' and to accept them would 'amount to an abdication by Your Majesty'. It added, that if circumstances did not permit their complete retraction, the task then became one of 'saving for the crown what it is still possible to save.' The main concerns of the Staatskonferenz were the powers of the palatine, and those of the new ministries of defence and finance. The result was that a new royal rescript was sent to the palatine, dated 28 March, which stated that the Hungarian Chancery be preserved with supervisory powers over the government; that the plenipotentiary powers of the palatine were restricted to the present occupier of that office only (it is impossible to tell which member of the Staatskonferenz proposed this, but certainly the question was raised of a rebellious palatine in command of Hungary's armed forces being unable to be brought to account by the king);¹⁴¹ that all revenues should be paid into the central treasury first; that the diet should be restricted to discussing matters of direct taxation; that questions concerning trade and the customs tariff should be negotiated with Vienna; that the king should continue to appoint officers and deploy troops even

138 i.e. not to appoint by himself — hence the view by taken by the Staatskonferenz over his appointment of Batthyány, that he had overstepped his authority. See pp. 39–40.

139 Károlyi, *Az 1848 tvcikkek*, pp. 231–37, Document 12B, Memorandum of Staatskonferenz, 26 March, 1848.

140 Ibid., pp. 226–31, Document 12A, Memorandum of the Committee of the Hungarian State Chancery, 25 March, 1848.

141 Ibid., *op. cit.*, pp. 71–72.

when absent from Hungary (His Majesty ‘clings to the principle of intimate connexion which derives from the Pragmatic Sanction and to his rights with respect to the employment of the armed forces in accordance with the law and to the nomination of officers.’);¹⁴² and that the Hungarians should pay part of the state debt. The clear implication was that Hungary did not require separate ministries of war and finance and that the palatine might not be trusted. Implied, too, was the view that the new ministry was merely a more accountable version of the old palatine’s council.

When the palatine read the new rescript to the diet on 29 March, there was uproar. Revolution again seemed to be on the cards and once again, the palatine staked his office on gaining a truly independent ministry for Hungary. Once again (on 24 March) he wrote an intimidating letter to the king:¹⁴³ ‘Your Majesty, The state of Hungary is at this moment so critical that the most violent outbreak is expected daily.’ And once more, he advised compromise and reconciliation — ‘With the arrival of a more favourable time, much can be arranged otherwise ...’ The result was a climb-down by the Staatskonferenz, although the king maintained his claims on the army through the Pragmatic Sanction:¹⁴⁴

While I recognize the fact that the organization of home defence and the votes for military requirements belong to the sphere of action of the legislature ... the question of the employment of the Hungarian army beyond the limits of the kingdom, as well as that of the appointment to military offices, can depend only on my royal decision, and that the counter-signature in such matters must be entrusted to the minister in attendance on my person.

Nor would the question of the state debt go away. On 5 April 1848 the new Austrian ministry complained that the Hungarians had so far remained silent on the question of their share of the state debt, a silence that was¹⁴⁵ ‘very serious and most dangerous for the credit of the Monarchy.’ The emperor as king, therefore, should instruct the diet and the palatine that one-quarter of the debt — 200,000,000 gulden — was to be paid by Hungary. A letter to this effect composed by Ficquelmont and approved by the Archduke Franz Karl was then sent to the palatine, having been signed by the king. It asked for the quarter of the debt and an

142 Knatchbull-Hugessen, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 21.

143 Printed as Appendix 22, Stiles, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, pp. 396–97.

144 Knatchbull-Hugessen, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 22.

145 Károlyi, *Az 1848 tvcikkek*, pp. 290–91, Document 23a, Protocol of the Austrian Council of Ministers, 5 April, 1848.

annual payment in future of 10,000,000 Gulden. However, the request was once again framed with reference to the Pragmatic Sanction:¹⁴⁶

Since nothing will be changed by these decrees or is intended to be changed in the fundamental relations between my kingdom of Hungary and my other states as established by the Pragmatic Sanction ... I urgently request you to make known to the Hungarian diet in the appropriate manner, the need to make a declaration on their part to uphold the public credit of my Monarchy, whereby all concern about the sharing of the Hungarian Lands in the common state debt will be comfortably removed.

Quite clearly, therefore, the Habsburgs in March to April 1848 made concessions to the Hungarians only under duress. Their main body for formulating policy, the Staatskonferenz, believed that the Hungarians were demanding a new constitution which reduced the king to a cipher both by transferring his effective powers to the palatine, in whom the ruling family had lost trust,¹⁴⁷ and by allowing affairs previously held to be the immediate concern of Vienna — finance, defence, trade — to be devolved to Hungary. In future, no Staatskonferenz would be able to guide the fortunes of the Monarchy as a whole or supervise those of Hungary through the Hungarian Chancery. In short, under the threat of force, the Habsburgs had submitted to a *coup d'état*. Not everything had been lost, however. An attempt had been made to claw back the concessions and when that failed, the Pragmatic Sanction was used to keep the imperial claim alive. In any case, paragraph six of Article III of the April Laws, seemed to limit the executive competence of the new Hungarian Ministry. It ran:¹⁴⁸

Whatever has been or ought to have been up to the present time, under the jurisdiction of the Hungarian Chancery or the Council of Lieutenancy, the Aulic Chamber (including the mines), and all affairs civil, military, and ecclesiastic,

146 Károlyi, *ibid.*, pp. 292–93, Document 23b, king's letter to the palatine, Vienna, 7 April, 1848.

147 The Archduke Ludwig told the palatine: 'You will be to blame if we lose Hungary.' For this quotation and a discussion of the views of other members of the imperial family, see Károlyi, *Az 1848 törökkek*, pp. 25–26.

148 Stiles, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, Appendix 27, Article III of the Hungarian diet of 1847–8, pp. 399–402, p. 400. Péter, *op. cit.*, p. 287, seems to agree: 'The *dicasteria* had never administered imperial affairs, neither foreign policy nor finances, and with regard to the army they had been limited to quartering, provisioning and raising recruits in Hungary. The paragraph, therefore, had no implications for the imperial authorities.' BUT, 'Hungarian politicians never accepted the "strict" interpretation of paragraph 6 of Law III of 1848 as viewed by the Staatskonferenz.' (*Ibid*)

as well as everything that concerns the finances and defence of the country, shall for the future be regulated and directed by the Hungarian ministry ...

And Kossuth himself said:¹⁴⁹

The king must not believe that his might is in any way impaired by the changes in the system or the concessions which he has made. ... Let His Majesty come as soon as possible into the midst of his faithful Magyars and convince himself that our fidelity is no empty word ...

Vienna could comfort itself — if only briefly — therefore, that there might be no radical change regarding financial, military and commercial matters. The king's throne might not be taken away from him after all.

Royal Dismissals and *Coups d'État*

Such complacency was not to last. On the issue of the debt, for example, the palatine replied that only the future Hungarian parliament could give a decision.¹⁵⁰ Meanwhile, all leading Hungarian politicians rejected the demand, Széchenyi predicting that the Austrians would be bankrupt within a few months and that 'we shall probably see our worthy king

149 Quoted in Edsel Walter Stroup, *Hungary in early 1848: The Constitutional Struggle against Absolutism in Contemporary Eyes*, Buffalo and Atlanta, 1977, p. 182. (Author's emphasis). Kossuth's statement raises the question whether the Hungarians had been honest in their dealings with the Court. In the view of Domokos Kosáry, the grand old man of contemporary Hungarian historiography, both sides were dishonest, or rather, planned to impose their own interpretation of the April Laws as soon as circumstances permitted. See Kosáry, *Magyarország és a nemzetközi politika 1848–1849-ben*, Budapest, 1999, p. 11. Péter, in a provocative review article, challenges this: '... no evidence has come to light so far that the two sides agreed to a settlement in April which they had no intention of keeping.' See László Péter, 'Old Hats and Closet Revisionists: Reflections on Domokos Kosáry's Latest Work on the 1848 Hungarian Revolution', in *The Slavonic and East European Review*, vol. 80, 2002, pp. 296–319, (p. 314). As will be seen, however, the Hungarian cabinet stretched its interpretation of the April Laws to the very limit from day one. Péter's assertion that 'the April settlement turned out to be a flop afterwards because the antagonistic policies pursued by both sides, mesmerised by the colliding conceptions of State, undermined the political will to cooperate, which, however, was also present on both sides' (Péter, *Old Hats* etc., p. 314) does not quite fit the facts. Rather than a slow breakdown of cooperation taking place, it would seem that from the very start the Hungarian government demonstrated precious little effort to co-operate. See below.

150 Spira, *op. cit.*, p. 98.

quietly installed in the royal palace at Buda.¹⁵¹ Kossuth, as finance minister, had in any case on 4 April — the day before the Austrian cabinet's complaint — judicially seized 400,000 florins which were due to be transferred from Buda to Vienna.¹⁵² It was clear, therefore, that he had no intention of transferring any funds to the Austrian government and certainly none to Jelačić. In his speech to the Hungarian parliament on 11 July 1848, he said:¹⁵³ '... I have of course suspended the remittance of money to the commander-general at Agram (Zagreb). I should not be worthy to breathe the free air of heaven — nay, the nation ought to spit me in the face — had I given money to our enemy. But the gentlemen of Vienna hold a different opinion; they considered my refusal as a disgusting desire to undermine the Monarchy.' In fact, he had been 'undermining the Monarchy' from the very start, as his actions on 4 April demonstrated. Again, one of the decisions taken *at the very first* Hungarian cabinet meeting — on a motion by Kossuth — was to instruct ships leaving Adriatic ports to fly Hungarian *not* Austrian flags and to have the Hungarian flag recognized in all foreign ports.¹⁵⁴ By the time of the second Hungarian cabinet meeting, the minutes were referring to Esterházy, minister at court, as Hungarian *foreign minister*¹⁵⁵ and, by the third cabinet meeting, the Hungarian government had already 'informed all general commands in Hungary and its united parts, under the aforementioned (April) Laws, to take orders exclusively from this ministry and that any disobedience will be treated as insubordination and against the law.'¹⁵⁶ The same general commands were also immediately to provide Budapest with a list of all weapons depots and military stores in their areas. Astonishingly, the cabinet also instructed 'the foreign minister' to make clear to Vienna that, 'despite its best will, public opinion would be incensed if the return of the army [not just the Hungarian regiments — *author*] from Italy were delayed much longer, and that he should press for compromise in Italy.'¹⁵⁷ On 24 April, Esterházy was again told to remind the king that Hungarian regiments could only be kept outside Hungary with the permission of the Hungarian government — a view the king

151 Ibid.

152 *Die Protokolle des österreichischen Ministerrates, 1848–1867, Abteilung I. Die Ministerien des Revolutionsjahres 1848*, Vienna, 1996, Cabinet meeting of 4 April 1848. Henceforth referred to as '*Austrian cabinet minutes*'.

153 Printed in Stiles, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, pp. 384–94 as Appendix, 19. See p. 391.

154 *Hungarian cabinet minutes*, 12 April 1848.

155 *Hungarian cabinet minutes*, 15 April 1848.

156 *Hungarian cabinet minutes*, 16 April 1848.

157 Ibid.

rejected given his own interpretation of paragraph 6, Law III of the April Laws.¹⁵⁸ Then on 21 May, Batthyány demanded that *all* troops in Hungary take an oath to the Hungarian *constitution* immediately. This eventually happened on 1 June, but at the time, the cabinet recorded its fear of ‘scandal’, should non-Hungarian troops refuse to take the oath.¹⁵⁹ On 30 May the order from Vienna to call up the fourth battalions of border regiments was ‘cancelled forthwith’ as ‘dangerous under present circumstances.’ The Hungarian ‘foreign minister’ was told to express to the king the ‘astonishment’ of the Hungarian cabinet that ‘Vienna war ministry still will not cease interfering in Hungarian military affairs.’¹⁶⁰ It would seem to this author at least that the Hungarian government ignored the Pragmatic Sanction from the very start. Whether it had been deliberately dishonest about this in the negotiations over the April Laws can be left to individual readers to decide.

Both Jelačić and Kossuth presented considerable problems for the Austrian cabinet. The former would not — could not — recognize the Hungarian ministry. He refused to go to Buda to meet the palatine, telling the Archduke Franz Karl that if he did so, he would not be allowed to return to Croatia, ‘so decisive is the spirit in this country against the Hungarian ministry.’¹⁶¹ After the palatine demanded that the king should countermand all his orders, the ban sent a new letter to the archduke on 13 May¹⁶² saying he was ‘sick to death’ of Hungarian behaviour. Employing his usual blunt style, he complained that he had become ‘the object of persecution and deadly hatred of the Magyars’, who were trying to force him to resign. However, although he would ‘gladly resign, if my resignation were possible’, ‘the nation will not have this.’ Fate, through him, had linked the future of ‘this gallant nation’ and the ‘welfare of the imperial house.’ If he resigned, the future of both would be at risk. He would sacrifice his life for the emperor, ‘but

158 See n. 145 above. Also *Hungarian cabinet minutes*, 24 April 1848. Kiss on p. 110 of the latter, in an explanation of footnote 5, quotes a letter from the palatine to the king of 24 April in which he reports ‘that the spirit which animates the Hungarian ministry (or at least the greatest part of it) can in no way be called good. The few sessions which His Imperial Highness has attended give sufficient proof of this.’ The king’s reply confirmed the ‘narrow’ interpretation of paragraph 6 of Law III. (p. 111).

159 *Hungarian cabinet minutes*, 21 May 1848. (Kiss on p. 118, footnote 1, says that the Italian troops had indicated they would refuse to take the oath.)

160 *Hungarian cabinet minutes*, 30 May 1848.

161 See Hauptmann, *Erzherzog Johann* etc., pp. 15–16.

162 Hauptmann, *Erzherzog Johann* etc., pp. 16–17.

to act against my holy conviction, against every right to exist given by God and Nature to every people, to every human being, that I cannot.' If the emperor would not protect his Croats, then the 30,000 of them fighting in Italy would return home to do so. His mood was equally clear in a letter to his brother Juro of 1 May:¹⁶³ 'My position, my work — brother — which stands totally at risk, is world historical. I can invite the blessing or curse of Posterity. My head, *quoad materiala*, is at risk¹⁶⁴ — so things stand at present. That I will not abandon my innermost conviction, however, — whatever my end will be — that I will stand purely by my conscience — of that you may be certain.' Yet the dynasty kept making concessions to the Hungarians, allowing them to take charge of the Military Frontier, instructing the general commands there to take orders from Buda,¹⁶⁵ and allowing the Hungarians to magyarize the regiments inside Hungary¹⁶⁶ either by transferring Hungarian and non-Hungarian officers or by granting requests that more and more Hungarian regiments should return to Hungary.

163 Hauptmann, *Erzherzog Johann* etc., p. 19.

164 *Austrian cabinet minutes*, 9 May 1848. The Austrian war minister, Count Latour reported a confidential letter from the Ban in which he wrote that 30 Magyars had sworn to draw lots to choose which of them should kill him.

165 Vienna, *Kriegsarchiv*, MK (1848) 882, Esterházy to Zanini, 24 April, MK (1848) 907, Batthyány to Lederer, 25 April, MK (1848) 908, Lederer to War Ministry, 29 April, MK (1848) Palatine to Zanini, 26 April, Batthyány to general commands in Hungary, 28 April, Zanini to Emperor, 2 May, MK (1848) 939, Zanini to Emperor, 27 May 1848.

166 E.g. *Austrian cabinet minutes*, 19 April 1848 and 10 May 1848 — discussions of Hungarian requests to send more Hungarian troops to Hungary. On the latter occasion, Latour protested that the Hungarians already had 32,000 troops there, but agreed to send more since the Hungarians were threatening to refuse to call up 60–80,000 more recruits that the Empire needed. The magyarization process continued throughout the summer. The *Austrian cabinet minutes* for 16 August approve the transfer of Austrian-German officers in Hungarian regiments to Austrian-German ones as well as a circular to all Hungarian officers in non-Hungarian regiments asking if they wish to transfer. The *Austrian cabinet minutes* for 22 August note the transfer of 500 Italian troops by Hungary from Szegedin to Vienna. On the other hand, according to the *Austrian cabinet minutes* for 26 August the Palatine informed Latour that the Hungarian opposition had failed in a parliamentary debate of 21 August to secure the 'magyarization of all regiments' by filling the third battalions of all line regiments with Hungarians. The Hungarians tackled the subject of returning Hungarian regiments to Hungary from the very first cabinet meeting and by 20 April had ordered Esterházy to ensure that 'all Hungarian military quartered in Galicia and Moravia should return home immediately.' See *Hungarian cabinet minutes*, 12 and 20 April 1848.

The Austrian cabinet regularly discussed its problems concerning Hungary.¹⁶⁷ On 11 April it complained of ‘the latest attempts by Hungary to take over the Military Frontier’; on 12 April it received news of calls to bring back all Hungarian troops from Italy and Galicia; on 14 April it agreed to leak the king’s letter to the palatine over Hungary’s share of the national debt to the press (‘Officially the outcome of this step is not known to the cabinet’); on 19 April it hoped for ‘more prudent behaviour from the Hungarians in their excessive demands to control military affairs’; on 30 April it refused to allow military borderers to elect deputies to the Hungarian parliament; on 4 May it complained of Hungarians taking over stores, guns, stud-farms, munitions, not to mention the Military Border; although on 24 May it simply refused to advise Hrabovszky, the commander in Slavonia, as to whether he should publicize the Hungarian take-over there.

On 10 May the Austrian interior minister, Baron Pillersdorf suggested that the cabinet contact the Hungarian ministry to settle outstanding differences.¹⁶⁸ Both countries were constitutional states and ‘should mutually support each other to maintain Austria as a great power.’ Thus they should work together on matters such as the imperial civil list, foreign policy and foreign trade, finance, defence, trade and tariffs between Austria and Hungary, perhaps negotiating a treaty to cover arrangements to settle these matters. On 24 May, as a result, the cabinet welcomed a suggestion by the Hungarian government to establish a commission — headed by Pulszky on their side — to deal with just such common problems.¹⁶⁹ Indeed, war minister Latour indicated he had already reached preliminary agreement with his opposite number in Hungary on military affairs. Yet nothing came of these developments. Regular payments meanwhile had to be made to Jelačić to pay his troops,¹⁷⁰ although when the vice-ban of Croatia, von Lentulay, asked Vienna to help cover Croatia’s civil deficit, the cabinet declared itself incompetent to act on the grounds that financial affairs in Hungary were now covered by the April Laws.¹⁷¹

It was the hurried union of Transylvania and Hungary — the Transylvanian diet was summoned on 29 May and voted unanimously for union with Hungary on 30 May, increasing the Hungarian population by two

¹⁶⁷ *Austrian cabinet minutes* for 11, 12, 14, 19 and 30 April and for 4 and 24 May respectively.

¹⁶⁸ *Austrian cabinet minutes*, 10 May 1848.

¹⁶⁹ *Austrian cabinet minutes*, 24 May 1848.

¹⁷⁰ *Austrian cabinet minutes*, 15 May 1848, also Vienna, *Kriegsarchiv*, MK (1848) 236 and 334, Krauss to Latour, 8 April 1848, MK (1848) 806 and 1062, Krauss to Zanini, 8 April 1848, MK (1848) 3421 and 3547, Jelačić to Latour, 8 July 1848.

¹⁷¹ *Austrian cabinet minutes*, 25 June 1848.

million — that forced the Austrian cabinet to review its position:¹⁷² ‘The cabinet has already deeply felt the disadvantageous results of those decisions which gave Hungary its own responsible ministry’ — insufficient concern for the monarchy as a whole, problems over the army and the Military Frontier, financial ruin, debt problems and the growing influence of the Hungarian war ministry. Austria now demanded therefore that the Union between Transylvania and Hungary should respect the following conditions: all imperial funds there should remain under imperial control; Hungary should pay its appropriate share of the national debt; the general command of the Transylvanian Military Frontier should remain under the control of Vienna; Transylvania should remain faithful to its obligation to raise recruits for the imperial army; that it should contribute to the expenses of the Austrian diplomatic corps; and that it should pay for the pensions of those staff of the Transylvanian chancery and court treasury in Vienna who had previously been employed on Transylvanian affairs. This reaction clearly demonstrated Austria’s frustration with Hungary, although it was clear that the Austrian government had no means at its disposal to enforce its demands. Needless to say, its ‘wishlist’ was simply ignored by the Hungarians. The Austrian cabinet was attempting to shut the stable door long after the Hungarian horse had bolted.

In any case, the Hungarians had by now decided to settle the main outstanding difference between Budapest and Vienna by forcing the king to get rid of Jelačić.¹⁷³ By 21 May the Hungarian government had decided to ask the king to suspend the ban from office. In Innsbruck on 28–29 May the palatine secured the agreement of Franz Karl to the suspension and to preventing the Croatian Sabor from assembling on 5 June. However, Jelačić was given twenty-four hours to appear at Innsbruck to defend himself. Batthyány was to be there to hear him. But the ban refused to come and insisted on summoning the Sabor. He rebuked the king with the words:¹⁷⁴ ‘Can Your Majesty approve that a loyal, honourable people such as the Croats and Slavonians should be the only one at present to be deprived of their right to exist?’ The result was the imperial manifesto of 10 June, written by Kossuth¹⁷⁵ in a propagandistic style that set out the Hungarian case, which suspended the ban, made the sabor illegal and appointed Field-Marshall Hrabovszky as royal commissar with

172 *Austrian cabinet minutes*, 5 June 1848

173 See *Hungarian cabinet minutes* of 10 and 20 May concerning Hrabovszky’s commission to take command of the Military Frontier.

174 Quoted by Hauptmann, *Erzherzog Johann* etc., p. 20.

175 Deak, *op. cit.*, p. 137.

the task of investigating what had been happening in Croatia and indicting Jelačić ‘and his accomplices’.¹⁷⁶ In the words of Istvan Deak:¹⁷⁷ ‘Although unenforceable and legally invalid (the suddenly recalcitrant Esterházy had refused his countersignature) Jelačić’s dismissal was a major victory for Hungary, one of the greatest in a long series of diplomatic triumphs that had begun in March.’

Yet, fate intervened on the part of the ban. For on 10 June, the Hungarian government also asked the Archduke John to mediate between Croatia and Hungary, without realizing that this gave him the perfect excuse to keep the ban in office. The Hungarians, on the other hand, published the manifesto dismissing Jelačić on 18 June. Meanwhile, totally unaware of any of this, the ban turned up belatedly at Innsbruck on 16 June at the head of a delegation from the Croat Sabor. There the Archduke John — who, apparently, was also unaware of the 10 June manifesto — arranged for him to address the court and diplomatic corps with great success. Neither Franz Karl nor the king mentioned the manifesto.

In fact, the hope was now that the Archduke John might save the day through mediation, for on 19 June he was appointed by the king as official mediator between the two sides, with instructions to reach a ‘mutual understanding’.¹⁷⁸ Equally significantly, on 16 June the Archduke had been appointed the Emperor’s plenipotentiary in Vienna.¹⁷⁹

The court in fact had a lot of sympathy for Jelačić, despite its need to conciliate the Hungarians. Through an intermediary — Louis Bedeković — Franz Karl had on 9 May had informed him of his ‘sympathies’ for the Croats and had advised him to remain at his post. However, he had made clear that ‘that is it’.¹⁸⁰ In short, nothing could be expected of him publicly. The imperial family, as a result, felt very guilty when the ban, on 20 June, read a copy of the manifesto dismissing him on his way home. ‘God and posterity will judge,’ was his reaction. He then saw the Archduke John, who swore he knew nothing about the manifesto.¹⁸¹ The Empress Mother, Caroline Augusta, expressed her outrage to Count

176 The manifesto is published as Appendix 18, in Stiles, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, pp. 381–84.

177 Deak, *op. cit.*, p. 137.

178 See Hauptmann, *Erzherzog Johann* etc., pp. 20–32 for the best account of events at Innsbruck.

179 *Austrian cabinet minutes*, 19 June 1848.

180 Hauptmann, *Erzherzog Johann*, etc., p. 18.

181 Hauptmann, *Erzherzog Johann*, etc., p. 31: ‘Only the Archduke John appears to have known nothing.’ Juro Jelačić’s mother-in-law reported that he formally swore that he knew nothing and promised to reverse the manifesto. (Which he later refused to do — Author.) See *Egger’s diary*, 25 June 1848.

Egger — ‘My God! My God! What will he think of us? Tell me, does he consider us false?’ — and defended the Archduchess Sophie in particular¹⁸² — but in the end it did not matter. Archduke John invited Jelačić to talks with Batthyány in Vienna, addressing him in the official invitation as ‘My ban of Croatia’.¹⁸³ However, despite repeated requests, he would not officially withdraw the manifesto itself.¹⁸⁴ This was partly on account of his need to mollify the Hungarians, who believed that their offer of mediation made on 10 June had been deliberately misinterpreted.¹⁸⁵ (They wanted the manifesto implemented before the mediation was undertaken.) The Archduke John, for his part, told them that ‘if he (the ban) were to be removed, there would be no peace to be reckoned with in Croatia.’ He was also ‘convinced that, should a peaceful compromise be reached, Jelačić would honestly and successfully see it through.’¹⁸⁶ But the archduke was also worried lest a Slav preponderance in the Monarchy should endanger ‘the German interest.’¹⁸⁷

182 *Egger’s diary*, 11 September 1848. Egger’s own reaction had been to denounce the Habsburgs as ‘this faint-hearted, faithless tribe,’ adding ‘Not for the first time have they sacrificed their most faithful servant and supporter.’ See *Egger’s diary*, 22 June 1848.

183 Bauer, *op. cit.*, p. 138.

184 The request came in letters of 1, 4, 6 and 9 July. See Hauptmann, *Erzherzog Johann etc.*, p. 79 fn. 56. Cf *Austrian cabinet minutes* for 11 July 1848, which record a report from Jelačić asking for the manifesto to be revoked.

185 Still, the Hungarian cabinet on 18 June wished the Archduke success in calming things down in Croatia and in restoring order there. It also promised that the Hungarian parliament which was soon to meet would consider measures to reconcile differences between Hungarians and Croats. *Hungarian cabinet minutes*, 18 June 1848. Its true position, however, was recorded on 21 June: ‘The Hungarian ministry did not wish the Archduke John to reach a compromise with the Croats by means of even-handed negotiations’ (but to go to the Military Border as someone with great influence there and refute the lie that the April laws had been conceded under duress). ‘Such negotiations with the Ban of Croatia, as they — apparently — consist at the demand of the Archduke John, were not the intention of the Hungarian ministry; such negotiations should not even have been in his power.’ *Hungarian cabinet minutes*, 21 June 1848.

186 Vienna, *Haus, Hof, und Staatsarchiv*, Kabinetsarchiv, Geheimakten, Schwarzenberg Nachlass, Karton 13, Fasc. VIII, State Counsellor Eduard Zsedényi to Batthyány and Kossuth, Vienna, 19 July 1848.

187 The term was used by the Archduke’s chief adviser on the issue, Court Counsellor Kleyle, who also noted: ‘it does not seem desirable to bring the kingdoms of Croatia and Slavonia into a close constitutional relationship with the Austrian hereditary lands’ — they should get the widest possible autonomy within some form of Hungary. Austroslavism was to be ruled out as a governing principle for the empire. Hauptmann, *Erzherzog Johann etc.*, p. 44.

In the end, the manifesto meant nothing, although the Croats reacted to it with fury, voting at a special assembly of the Sabor in reaction to it to withdraw all troops from Italy, to dethrone the Habsburgs, to ally with Sardinia against them, and called on all Slavs to defend their right of nationality.¹⁸⁸ The ban, for his part, had already from Innsbruck sent a proclamation to Italy telling the Croat troops to stay there and now continued to defend the dynasty.¹⁸⁹ In Hauptmann's view,¹⁹⁰ had he acted in a manner similar to the Sabor's, 'catastrophe for the whole state would not have been avoided. Yet he sought on the contrary once again to work for Austria, for the Monarchy, even against the will of the emperor, since he intended to prevent everything from descending into the chaos of civil and racial war. Even though the wearer of the crown had dismissed him under, to him, inexplicable circumstances, he felt himself bound even more to it as the symbol of a supranational empire.' So now Jelačić had saved the dynasty.

All hopes for peace were now invested in the talks arranged in Vienna by the Archduke John for 29 July. Before they took place both sides furnished the Archduke with a statement of their positions. These are summarized at some length in the Austrian cabinet minutes.¹⁹¹ In the end the Archduke did not attend the talks, leaving on 30 July for Frankfurt where he had been elected *Reichsverweser*. However, 'a comparison of the Hungarian and Croat conditions shows that they were in principle almost mutually exclusive.'¹⁹² Batthyány would not consider transferring the portfolios of war, defence and trade to Vienna or grant autonomy for

188 *Austrian cabinet minutes*, 25 June 1848. Kulmer was invited to speak on the situation in Croatia. Latour reported on the 'eccentric' resolutions of the Sabor.

189 See Sked, 'Jelačić in the Summer of 1848', pp. 141–43.

190 Hauptmann, *Erzherzog Johann* etc., p. 30.

191 *Austrian cabinet minutes*, 8 July 1848. The Hungarian government, however, drew Batthyány's attention to the fact that it expected 'the Austrian government to make the unfriendly policy it appears to be pursuing towards us, not merely fully friendly, but to cooperate successfully with the imperial authority as well as all members of the dynasty to restore loyal obedience to our laws with regard to order and peace in the territory of the Hungarian crown as soon as possible; and to restore, too, the legal independence and freedom of our fatherland in all respects, including the free pursuit of financial and military affairs, free from all foreign intervention, as matters which should be clearly, openly and honestly acknowledged and protected. This, all the more so, as the Hungarian ministry, in agreement with the whole nation, has decided, at any price, not to depart even by a hair's breadth from the independence, laws and freedoms of the Hungarian nation sanctioned by the king; it will respond to friendship with a similar friendship but to hostility with appropriate retaliation.' *Hungarian cabinet minutes*, 5 July 1848.

192 Hauptmann, *Erzherzog Johann* etc., p. 43.

the Serb Vojvodina. There could be no compromise in other words between a federally reorganized monarchy — the Austroslavist programme of the Croats — and one in which Hungary existed as an independent state, the aim of Kossuth, Batthyány and the whole Hungarian government. The Austrian cabinet, which had invested great hopes in the work of the Archduke John, was genuinely disappointed.¹⁹³ It wanted a peaceful resolution of the differences between Hungary and Croatia, lest the empire's Slavs be drawn into a wider conflict that would totally destabilize the Monarchy.¹⁹⁴

Kossuth's 'dismissal' came with the resignation of the Hungarian government after the Austrian government demanded a renegotiation of the terms of Hungary's independence at the end of August, a development soon followed by Jelačić's official restoration to office on 4 September and his invasion of Hungary a week later. It would be tedious to go through all the evidence, but the work of Hajnal¹⁹⁵ on foreign policy and Urbán¹⁹⁶ on defence policy make it crystal clear that the Hungarian government almost from the start had decided to ignore the Pragmatic Sanction and turn Hungary into a separate, independent kingdom, linked to Austria only by the monarchical personal union.¹⁹⁷ No money was given to Austria for common affairs or as part of the national debt;

193 *Austrian cabinet minutes*, 25 June 1848. The cabinet endorsed Jelačić's plea that the Archduke John should put his mediation mandate into practice. Indeed, 'it was unanimously agreed by the cabinet, that it would bear a heavy responsibility if, during an affair of such importance for the welfare of the entire Monarchy, it did not use all appropriate means at its disposal to do everything to prevent a civil war breaking out, in which Austrian troops would face each other in two hostile camps, a civil war, which at the present moment, when national sympathies and antipathies have reached a peak, could easily provide a torch for all branches of the Slavs.' It is notable that once again, the Austrians were as worried by the Slavs as they were by the Hungarians. In this context it should be noticed that, according to the *Austrian cabinet minutes* of 23 September — well after the ban's invasion of Hungary — the Austrian cabinet agreed to a request by Pulszky from the Hungarians that the authorities in Moravia should be alerted to stop the passage of armed Slav volunteers making their way to fight in Hungary.

194 See footnotes 175 and 181 above.

195 István Hajnal, *A Batthyány-kormány külpolitikája*, Budapest, 1957. But see also Kosáry, *op. cit.*

196 Aladár Urbán, *A nemzetőrség és honvédség szervezése 1848 nyarán*, Budapest, 1973.

197 In the words of Péter, *op. cit.*, p. 289: '... after the inauguration of the April Laws on the side not merely of the Hungarian radicals but of the ministry itself, the wish became evident that relations between Austria and Hungary *should* so far as possible be restricted to the person of the monarch.'

Hungarian emissaries attempted to set up embassies in foreign countries; a separate defence force was established; and Hungary failed to give positive support to Austria in Italy. In all of this Kossuth played the major role, although he was perfectly aware of the obligations imposed on Hungary by the Pragmatic Sanction.¹⁹⁸ In fact, he tried to evade answering questions on the subject, telling parliament on 20 July 1848 in reply to an enquiry on the nature of the obligations it imposed on the country, ‘nobody in Hungary would be pleased with the answer.’¹⁹⁹ In the end Kossuth manoeuvred the government on Italy, for example, into accepting a policy of only agreeing to send reinforcements to Italy if the Italians refused to accept an honourable peace — meaning the Austrian surrender of Lombardy.²⁰⁰ (Jelačić of course sent reinforcements and pro-Habsburg proclamations).²⁰¹ The cornerstone of Hungarian policy was that the Habsburgs would lose both their German and Italian territories and would be forced to retreat to Buda. (Indeed, the Frankfurt Parliament was to lay down that Austria could only be part of Germany if it established a personal union with its non-German territories.) Meanwhile as finance minister he made sure that no money left Hungary for Austria, no contribution was made to the national debt, duties were imposed on Austrian imports, and Hungary eventually printed its own banknotes (‘the Kossuth notes’).²⁰² And, of course, no money was sent to Croatia under

198 *Blackwell Papers*, National Academy of Sciences, Budapest, Copies of, and Extracts from Despatches addressed to Viscount Ponsonby, Her Majesty’s Ambassador at the Court of Vienna by J.A. Blackwell during his Third (official) Mission to Hungary, 1847–48, Despatch number 15, Pressburg, 3 (5?) April 1848. He recorded a conversation with Esterházy who told him that ‘Kossuth admitted that Hungary was bound by the Pragmatic Sanction to defend the United Monarchy against a foreign enemy.’ However, the whole government agreed that under then prevailing circumstances such a proposition was ‘entirely out of the question.’

199 Péter, *op. cit.*, p. 287, fn. 205.

200 On Kossuth and Italy see Hajnal, *op. cit.*, chapter 7. On 5 July the Hungarian government laid down its position on Italy. It acknowledged its obligation under the Pragmatic Sanction to defend the king if he were attacked, but ‘it clearly protests at participating in the suppression of the Italian nation in Lombardy-Venetia and is only ready to provide aid in this matter, on the conclusion of a peace and an agreement with the Lombardo-Venetian nation, which on the one hand, corresponds with the dignity of the King and, on the other, the rights, freedom and appropriate wishes of the Italian nation.’ *Hungarian cabinet minutes*, 23 July 1848.

201 See footnote 177.

202 On Kossuth as finance minister, see István Sinkovics, ‘Kossuth, az önálló pénzügyek megteremtője’, in *Emlékkönyv Kossuth Lajos születésének 150. évfordulójára*, 2 vols, Budapest, 1952, vol. 1, pp. 87–173.

the ban. The Austrian finance minister complained:²⁰³ 'The Hungarians have not paid a farthing into the central treasury since April, although they should have transferred more than three million florins. They even dispute the right of the treasury to demand arrears from previous years, which also amount to several millions.' Despite numerous attempts by Vienna to solve the common financial problem, the Hungarians stalled continuously so that nothing had been settled before September 1848.²⁰⁴

Given the growing crisis in Croatia and the end of the Italian war, the Austrian government's patience ran out and eventually it got the king to agree to send the palatine a memorandum drawn up by state counsellor von Pipitz which outlined Austrian grievances and called on Hungary to negotiate a new relationship with Vienna based on the Pragmatic Sanction.²⁰⁵ The Hungarian government was also sent a copy on 31 August and was asked to formulate its reply within two weeks. On 18 September the palatine was asked to remind the Hungarians that they had failed to reply. However, on 31 August the Hungarian government had again told Vienna that it would send no money to Jelačić.²⁰⁶ On 11 September, the day the ban invaded, the government resigned. It had still not proved willing to negotiate on the basis of the Pragmatic Sanction.

The Pipitz memorandum was extremely well written and praised the past common efforts of Austria and Hungary. It stated that the powers granted to the palatine and the policies of the Hungarian government since April 1848, which it listed in detail, contradicted the Pragmatic Sanction, which was the Monarchy's 'fundamental law' or constitution. It ended by stating that the Austrian and Hungarian governments together should work to restore the unity of the highest leadership of the state. The relevant Austrian cabinet minutes²⁰⁷ envisaged that this could be done either by the Hungarians sending under-secretaries of state to join the ministries of war, finance and trade in Vienna, or by Prince Esterházy, as

203 *Austrian cabinet minutes*, 3 July 1848.

204 For the relevant correspondence, see the documents published in Rudolf Sieghart, *Zolltrennung und Zolleinheit*, Vienna, 1915, pp. 298–315.

205 See *Austrian cabinet minutes*, 27 and 29 August, 17 and 18 September. For full text of the Pipitz memorandum see either *Sammlung der für Ungarn erlassenen Allerhöchsten Manifeste und Proklamationen, dann der Kundmachungen der Oberbefehlshaber der kaiserlichen Armee in Ungarn*, Buda, 1850, Anhang 1848, II, pp. 5–19 or Adelstein's *Archiv des ungarischen Ministeriums und Landesverteidigungsausschusses*, 3 vols, Altenburg, 1851, vol. 2, Document, 651, pp. 317–329.

206 Vienna, *Kriegsarchiv*, MK (1848) 4823.

207 *Austrian cabinet minutes*, 27 August 1848.

Hungarian minister at court, joining the Austrian cabinet on all occasions when Hungarian interests had to be represented, or by a continuous correspondence with him. It also envisaged, in terms of a legislative body, the establishment of a Reichsrat to which ministers of both countries might be responsible. There was certainly no plan to abolish the Hungarian government. The Austrian cabinet desperately wanted peace, compromise and imperial administrative unity — not the destruction of Hungarian home-rule.

Gambling on Illegality

That war was the outcome was not the responsibility of the Austrian cabinet but of Jelačić and Kossuth. Neither, in fact, desired an armed struggle, but both gambled that they could risk one in order to win peace on their terms. In the case of the former, the evidence suggests that only after the breakdown of the talks in Vienna on 29 July did he decide that war would have to be resorted to. Batthyány, after all, had told him that 'the sword will decide between you and us'.²⁰⁸ Yet he still needed money and right up till September had to be subsidized by Vienna just to pay his troops.²⁰⁹ Moreover, he would have to build up an army from scratch using whatever men remained — officers were almost non-existent — on the Military Frontier who had some military training. (The result was an undisciplined rabble of 50,000, with pikes and muskets).²¹⁰ Latour might arrange for the ban's regular troops plus widows and orphans to be paid, but otherwise offered only moral support. A personal letter of 23 June ran:²¹¹ 'It is time to take the offensive — if you want to save yourself and your fatherland. If you lack sufficient force, everything is lost.' Yet Latour, officially, as War Minister, had informed him:²¹² 'I ... must subordinate my administrative authority to that of the Hungarian war ministry.' When Kempen visited Latour in Vienna on 18 August, he found that people at the war ministry (including Latour) 'believe that they have done enough by offering him sympathy ... Thus I saw no consolation from this side, far less help.'²¹³ Yet Kempen and Jelačić

208 Hartley, *op. cit.*, p. 198.

209 *Austrian cabinet minutes*, 11 July, 1 September, (481,000 fl. to cover deficits for June, July and August, and extra 170,000 requested for September, but only 100,000 sent to him immediately).

210 Sked, 'Jelačić in the Summer of 1848', pp. 154–55.

211 Hauptmann, *Erzherzog Johann* etc., p. 55, ft. 73.

212 Vienna, *Kriegsarchiv*, MK (1848) 4123, 14 August.

213 Kempen's diary, 18 August.

were led to believe from reports from within Hungary, that if he invaded that country, the regular troops there would come over to him peacefully.²¹⁴ The Hungarian government certainly feared the same after its commissar in Southern Hungary, Csány, resigned. He had reported that the local commander there, Major-General Ottinger, had ordered his troops not to resist Jelačić and his Croats should they invade.²¹⁵ Hence the ban's expectation of being met peacefully when he crossed the Drava on 11 September was by no means simply a delusion. Yet, when military regulars asked to see his orders once he had crossed the Drava, he, of course, had none to show them — since neither the court nor the Austrian ministry had furnished him with any. Both also expected him to be welcomed by the army inside Hungary, although, politically, they double-crossed him by appointing an Hungarian, Count Lamberg, to take charge of Hungary politically and militarily. Only after Lamberg's murder was Jelačić put in charge.

At first everything seemed fine. Hrabovsky, now commander in Budapest, wrote to Latour on 25 September that he expected to receive Jelačić 'peacefully' there,²¹⁶ although on 29 September the ban was forced to fight the Hungarians at Pákozd, where he was halted. Thereafter, he could expect no Hungarian troops to come over to him. Yet it was only on 3 October that the king appointed him commander-in-chief in Hungary, leading the ban to exclaim:²¹⁷ 'Everything too late, everything as always. Two weeks ago, all Hungarian troops would have joined us in a moment, now they are our most bitter enemies.' He saved the Habsburgs once

214 *Kempen's diary*, 21 August, for example, reports the inability of the Hungarians to force the removal of all officers stationed on the Drava who refuse to fight the Croats.

215 *Hungarian cabinet minutes*, 12 August 1848. Csány was told to remain at his post and Ottinger was replaced. On 14 August it was decided to prepare a law 'ordering home all Hungarian troops not stationed in Italy but in the other Austrian provinces' and 'allowing all Austrian soldiers in the country to leave, if they hesitate to fight against our enemies and the insurgents.' All regiments returning to Hungary were to face a commissariat which would administer oaths to all officers asking them whether they were willing to fight all enemies of Hungary. If they were unwilling then they would have to resign their commissions. The same oath was to be administered to all officers camped on the Drava. If they refused they were to be immediately replaced. The ban was to be asked in the meanwhile to state his intentions regarding the troops he was concentrating around Warasdin (Varaždin). See *Hungarian cabinet minutes*, 14 August 1848. Clearly, therefore, there was general confusion as to whether Hungarian troops (particularly officers) would resist Jelačić or not.

216 Vienna, *Kriegsarchiv*, MK (1848) 5541.

217 Ferdinand Hauptmann, *Jelačić's Kriegzug nach Ungarn 1848*, 2 vols, Graz, 1975 (Zur Kunde Südosteuropas, II/5) vol.1, p. 105.

again by defeating the Hungarians outside Vienna at Schwechat, but the Habsburgs once again double-crossed him by subordinating his army to that of Prince Windischgraetz; subsequently they deprived him of all political influence.

If Jelačić's gamble on illegally entering Hungary, to link up peacefully with the supposedly loyal regular troops there, had failed, Kossuth now gambled in a similar fashion by illegally entering Austria with the Hungarian army in the hope of linking up with a now revolutionary Vienna and being able to force peace on the court. His idea was to avoid a major war by winning a single battle at Vienna and dictating a political settlement. This was a more radical plan than the ban's had been, but it was the invasion of Hungary by the latter and his march to Vienna which had forced Kossuth to consider such a strategy at all. Unfortunately, just like the ban, he was forced to rely on imaginary allies.

That this was likely to be the case was known to him. Pulszky had been to Vienna to consult with the leaders of the revolution there. His mission had been to secure a *request* for Hungarian intervention. However, none was forthcoming. The Viennese wanted Hungarian support but would not ask for it in case they were regarded as rebels. Pulszky became angry:²¹⁸

we did not intend to cross the Leitha without being asked to by our neighbours; they did not dare call on us, in case they were held to be rebels. They considered themselves loyal subjects, though they had killed a minister and thrown out the military.

The commander of the Viennese National Guard, Messenhauser, took the same position:²¹⁹ 'he was no rebel, but a loyal subject; he also did not want to identify the fate of Vienna with Hungary's rebellion.' He would not even issue a publication denouncing the Croats as enemies. Yet Pulszky wrote a confidential letter to Kossuth saying that 'success is still certain',²²⁰ and that the Hungarians should march on Vienna before the arrival of Windischgraetz's troops and dictate peace to the court. Once back in Pressburg he adopted the same position:²²¹ 'It is our moral and political duty to help those who are in danger on our account and to show that we are ready to help our friends.' Meanwhile the Hungarian army commander pointed out that his troops were inexperienced, that Windischgraetz had superior forces, that the National Guard from Komárom was

218 Pulszky, *Memoirs*, vol. 2, p. 230.

219 Pulszky, *Memoirs*, vol. 2, p. 233.

220 Pulszky, *Memoirs*, vol. 2, p. 234.

221 Pulszky, *Memoirs*, vol. 2, p. 247.

a hindrance, and that many officers were refusing to fight imperial troops on imperial soil.²²² Indeed, he himself had received instructions from Windischgraetz to send all non-Hungarian officers to the imperial camp immediately, if they were not to be treated as rebels.²²³ Astonishingly, Kossuth took the gamble on invasion. He and some colleagues composed a memorandum for Windischgraetz explaining they were only attacking Jelačić on 'neutral ground',²²⁴ while the Hungarian army was won over by some eloquent speeches and an assurance from Görgei that, should they lose, their retreat was secure. Kossuth, as a result, invaded Austria with no firmer assurance of the support he required than Jelačić had had when he had invaded Hungary.

Despite everything he had heard from Pulcszky, in a letter from Pest on 15 October he demanded of the Viennese 'a well-armed force of 20–30,000 men in our camp, with which jointly to attack the enemy.'²²⁵ On 22 October, FML Moga, the Hungarian military commander, wrote to him, concerned that no reinforcements would arrive from Vienna, and advised against an attack.²²⁶ A battle was fought at Schwechat in any case and that battle was lost to Jelačić. Kossuth explained:²²⁷ 'Luck has not favoured us but one must not despair for the fatherland on that account.' He blamed defeat on the 'silence of Vienna' — no help arrived after all — but still believed that inside Hungary the army was invincible. In the end, of course, this proved an illusion and Kossuth, too, ended up a glorious, romantic failure.

I should have liked to discuss several other themes — nationality policy in particular — but I think enough evidence has already been produced to prove that Kossuth and Jelačić were 'mirror images' of each other. Both were beloved national leaders and heroes, both were

222 *Ibid.*

223 Pulcszky, *Memoirs*, vol. 2, p. 246.

224 Windischgraetz refused to read it saying, notoriously, that he did not 'negotiate with rebels'. Pulcszky, *Memoirs*, vol. 2, p. 248.

225 For a considerable correspondence surrounding Kossuth's invasion of Austria, see Friedrich Walter, *Magyarische Rebellenbriefe 1848. Aemtliche und Privat-Correspondenzen der magyarischen Rebellenregierung, ihrer Führer und Anhänger*, Munich 1964. For this quotation, see Document 65, Kossuth's instructions for his emissaries to Vienna, pp. 101–02, p. 102.

226 Walter, *Magyarische Rebellenbriefe*, Document 84, Moga to Kossuth, Headquarters, Parndorf, 22 October 1848, pp. 124–26.

227 Walter, *Magyarische Rebellenbriefe*, Document 90, Kossuth to the Committee of National Defence, Pressburg, 30 October 1848, p. 130. Cf. Friedrich Walter, 'Die Ursachen des Scheiterns der madjarischen Waffenhilfe für die Wiener Oktober-Revolutionäre 1848', *Südost-Forschungen*, 22, 1963, pp. 377–400.

charismatic, both were willing to risk all for their cause, both were liberal monarchists who ‘converted’ their national constitutions, both were appointed to their posts under peculiar circumstances, both were willing to gamble on force for success, both were betrayed by the Habsburgs, both ended up as failures. Today, both are deservedly honoured by the countries they served, long after the Habsburg Monarchy has disappeared.

Kossuth's Pie in the Sky: Serbia and the Great Danubian Confederation Scam

Ian D. Armour

Between 1849 and the conclusion of the Ausgleich in 1867, the concept of a Danubian confederation was much discussed, at least in Hungarian émigré circles. Around this indisputable fact has grown up a persistent myth that such schemes, precisely because they offered a genuine compromise to the non-Magyar peoples of historic Hungary, and their co-nationals in surrounding states, represented a viable alternative to Dualism. Tragically, according to this interpretation, Danubian confederation was never given a chance, in part because its advocates were in exile and powerless, in part because the non-Magyar nationalities showed no interest in it; but it was nevertheless the last, best hope for inter-ethnic harmony in the area. According to Oscar Jászi, writing in the 1920s, the Hungarian emigration under Lajos Kossuth 'acknowledged completely the errors of the past', and their idea of Danubian confederation was 'an ingenious anticipation of an historical necessity.'¹ Domokos Kosáry, in a work first published in English in 1969, was of the opinion that 'Kossuth anticipated his time by urging the settlement of minority problems not exclusively on the territorial basis [...] but on the basis of autonomous communities [...] within historical units.'² According to Kosáry, 'The greatest obstacle was in the circumstance that the mentality of these peoples [the non-Magyars] was not ready for such collaboration, even if Austria's grip could have been broken.'³ If only, these interpretations suggest, there had been a more generous response to Kossuth's noble if

1 Oscar Jászi, *The Dissolution of the Habsburg Monarchy*, Chicago & London, 1929, pp. 312, 313.

2 *History of the Hungarian Nation*, Part I: 830–1919 AD, based on the works and former publications of Dr Dominic G. Kosáry, Astor Park, Fl., 1969, p. 155 (hereafter *History of the Hungarian Nation*).

3 *Ibid.*

belated conversion to such ideas, the subsequent history of the Danubian basin might have been different.

The title of the present paper is a deliberately provocative one, because I believe the story of these successive schemes shows their essential impracticability. This is particularly the case when we look at how Danubian confederation was meant to apply to the autonomous Principality of Serbia, and at the reaction of the Serbian government to the idea. The fact is that we simply cannot know whether Danubian confederation would have worked, because it never got off the drawing-board; but the impracticability was obvious to observers at the time, and nowhere more so than in Belgrade. Moreover, research into related areas of enquiry in this period suggests strongly that we are dealing with a rather sad fantasy. In other words, Kossuth and his associates in exile ought to have known that their fantastical proposals would meet only with scepticism and derision; indeed, the sheer impracticality of the scheme suggests that its originators may not themselves have taken it seriously, and that they deployed it primarily as a device for winning support in specific circumstances. The following paper will first give a necessarily brief résumé of the Danubian confederation proposals themselves. It will then describe the Principality of Serbia and what its government's priorities were. Finally it will assess what the dealings between Serbia and the Hungarian emigration amounted to, and why in the end the results of these contacts were bound to be so exiguous.

I: Danubian Confederation Schemes

Dimitrije Đorđević, writing over thirty years ago about the proliferation of schemes for federation or confederation after 1848 (not all of them concocted by Hungarians), pointed out that there were two basic problems being addressed. The first problem was the conflict of nationalities within the Habsburg Monarchy. Most schemes for solving this problem involved some sort of restructuring of the Monarchy internally; only in the case of Italian, and to some extent Hungarian and Polish nationalism, was secession or break-up seen as the answer. The second problem was the position of the Balkan Christian nationalities within the Ottoman Empire. This aspect of the 'Eastern Question', at least in the eyes of Balkan nationalists, posited the destruction of Ottoman rule.⁴ The Danubian confederation

⁴ Dimitrije Đorđević, 'Projects for the Federation of South-East Europe in the 1860s and 1870s', *Balcanica*, 1, 1970, pp. 119–45 (pp. 119–20). (Hereafter 'Projects').

scheme evolved by Lajos Kossuth and other Hungarian émigrés, by contrast, was unusually ambitious, in that it proposed a solution combining both these problems, and doing away with both the Habsburg Monarchy and the Ottoman Empire in the Balkans.

The thinking of Kossuth and his associates in exile on this matter went through several stages. Even before the defeat of the revolutionary government, in the spring of 1849, Count László Teleki, Kossuth's representative in Paris, urged Kossuth to consider granting effective self-determination, within Hungary, not only to the Croats, but to Serbs and Romanians as well. Beyond this federally reconstituted Hungary, moreover, Teleki held out the visionary prospect of a situation in which other non-Magyar peoples would 'with joy accept Hungary as the centre and queen of a future Danubian confederation, whose power would break the monster of absolutism forever and which would extend from the Baltic to the Black Sea.'⁵ The Romanian Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia, Serbia, Bulgaria, and possibly even Bohemia and Moravia could conceivably join this Hungarocentric superstate. All it required, Teleki urged Kossuth, was 'a little self-sacrifice'.⁶

Teleki's ideas are of interest, not just because they represent the most advanced opinion of any Hungarian leader at this point, but also because Teleki was clearly influenced by a variety of contacts: by Italian Mazzinian nationalists; by the Polish emigration under Prince Jerzy Adam Czartoryski; and by Romanian revolutionaries such as Alexandru Golescu and Nicolae Bălcescu. Giuseppe Mazzini himself had argued in 1832 that Hungary's mission was to act as the centre of a 'liberal federation' of all those peoples for whom the Danube was the vital artery of communication; and in 1848 Teleki had been one of the most vehement opponents of sending Hungarian troops to help suppress the revolts against Habsburg rule in the Italian Peninsula.⁷ In Paris, Teleki established good relations

5 Teleki to Kossuth, 14 May 1849, in *Teleki László válogatott munkái*, 2 vols., ed. Gábor G. Kemény, Budapest, 1961, ii, p. 28.

6 Ibid. The genesis of Teleki's initiative is discussed in numerous sources, among which the most detailed are Lajos Pásztor, *La Confederazione danubiana nel pensiero degli Italiani ed Ungheresi nel Risorgimento*, Rome, 1949, pp. 11–16 (hereafter *La Confederazione*); Gyula Mérei, 'Föderationspläne in Südosteuropa und die Habsburger Monarchie in den Jahren 1849–1914', *Nouvelles Études Historiques*, 2, 1965, pp. 5–45 (pp. 6–12) (hereafter 'Föderationspläne'); Zoltán Horváth, *Teleki László 1810–1861*, 2 vols., Budapest, 1964, i, pp. 247–54 (hereafter *Teleki László*).

7 Pásztor, *La Confederazione*, pp. 3–4, quoting Mazzini's *Dell'Ungheria* (1832); see also Istvan Deak, *The Lawful Revolution: Louis Kossuth and the Hungarians 1848–1849*, New York, 1979, p. 294 (hereafter *The Lawful Revolution*).

with Golescu, the emissary of the Wallachian government, and was consequently familiar with the plan drafted in May 1848 by Bălcescu, for a Swiss-style confederation of the Romanian Principalities, Hungary and Transylvania.⁸

The most significant of the influences on Teleki, however, was Czartoryski's Polish circle based at the Hotel Lambert in Paris. Czartoryski had a long history of promoting the cooperation of the peoples along the Danube, and he saw the revolutions of 1848 as the chance to reorder the whole of Eastern Europe as a 'democratic alliance of equal and independent states', the principal function of which would be to fend off both Russian and Austrian domination.⁹

On the subject of Hungary, the Polish emigration had its doubts. The simmering race war in southern Hungary throughout 1848–49 was hardly the best advertisement for cooperation, and Czartoryski was inclined to see Kossuth's government in particular as an oppressor of national minorities not unlike the Russian and Habsburg empires. Teleki, however, overcame these reservations, and the result was an agreement reached on 19 May 1849 between Teleki, the Poles and others, by which Teleki held out the recognition of complete equality of nationalities, and autonomy for Croatia, the Vojvodina and the Romanian-inhabited portions of Transylvania; the rights of Germans, Slovaks and other minorities within these territories were to be safeguarded by the granting of some form of self-government, at least at municipal level.¹⁰

Teleki had earlier made it clear to Kossuth, in a despatch of 7 March, his belief that Hungary, with its back to the wall and facing Russian intervention on the side of a newly absolutist Habsburg Monarchy, could not afford to alienate its national minorities. 'For God's sake, give them a fine proclamation, give them whatever they want. And if Austria can't be made to collapse, Hungary must in any case be reconstituted as a confederation.'¹¹ The problem was that neither Teleki's preliminary negotiations with the Poles and others, nor the agreement of 19 May, had the authorization of the Hungarian government, and the agreement was immediately repudiated by Kossuth. The Hungarian foreign minister, Kázmér

8 Pásztor, *La Confederazione*, pp. 6–7; Mérei, 'Föderationspläne', pp. 6–7.

9 Ibid., pp. 6–9; the description is Mérei's, p. 6. See also Piotr S. Wandycz, *The Lands of Partitioned Poland 1795–1918*, Seattle & London, 1974, pp. 120–22.

10 French text of the agreement of 19 May 1849 in Horváth, *Teleki László*, ii, pp. 177–80; see also the preliminary memorandum of Frigyes Szarvady (Teleki's secretary) for Czartoryski, 9 Mar. 1849, *ibid.*, pp. 172–74.

11 Endre Kovács, *Magyar-délszláv megbékélési törekvések 1848/49-ben*, Budapest, 1958, p. 89.

Batthyány, issued a circular on 10 June to all Hungary's representatives abroad, explicitly repudiating Teleki's agreement and with it the very idea of a confederation. The non-Magyar nationalities would be assured full civil liberties, and the free use of their language within Hungary, but Hungary's territorial integrity and its unitary constitution could not be infringed, nor could the dominant position of the Magyars within the state be abandoned.¹²

With hindsight, it is hard not to agree with the judgment of Ferenc Pulszky, Teleki's fellow representative abroad, who considered the whole episode a waste of time.¹³ Even one of Teleki's biographers concluded that Danubian confederation was 'unrealistic'.¹⁴ It seems clear that neither the Hungarian government nor the nationalities were ever likely to agree to such a scheme, given the bad feeling that already existed between them. Yet the fact is that the Kossuth government's peremptory refusal even to consider a federated Hungary makes Kossuth's subsequent conversion (if that is the *mot juste*) to the idea all the more suspect. Teleki's proposal, however high-minded, was indeed impractical, and the arguments against it after 1849 were no less obvious than before.

Certainly it was only in exile that Kossuth's own thinking started to move seriously in the direction of confederation, albeit in a rather zig-zag fashion. As early as October 1849, stranded at Vidin in Ottoman Bulgaria, Kossuth began to envisage, in the words of the Polish émigré Count Władisław Zamoyski, 'the creation of a vast confederation of states comprising Hungary, Poland, Croatia, Serbia and the Romanian lands, a sort of '*Banda orientale*'.¹⁵ Kossuth still regarded as 'indispensable [...] the historic and political unity' of Hungary, but within this framework he envisaged complete civil and political equality for all nationalities, as well as the free exercise of language in local administration, although the 'language of politics and diplomacy' would still have to be Magyar.¹⁶

12 Horváth, *Teleki László*, ii, pp. 283–84; also Mérei, 'Föderationspläne', pp. 11–12; Deák, *The Lawful Revolution*, pp. 296–97.

13 Ferenc Pulszky, *Életem és korom*, 2 vols., Budapest, 1958 [1880], ii, p. 495–96.

14 Horváth, *Teleki László*, i, p. 252.

15 Memorandum by Count Władisław Zamoyski, 10 Nov. 1849, citing talks with Kossuth on 29 Oct., in István Hajnal (ed.), *A Kossuth-emigráció Törökországban*, Budapest, 1927, no. 48, p. 530 (hereafter *A Kossuth-emigráció*). See also the discussion of this in László Katus, 'A magyar politikai vezetőréteg a délszláv kérdésről 1849 és 1867 között', in István Fried (ed.), *Szerbek és magyarok a Duna mentén*, II: *Tanulmányok a szerb-magyar kapcsolatok köréből 1848–1867*, Budapest, 1987, pp. 147–84 (note 6, p. 173); see also p. 149; (hereafter 'A magyar politikai vezetőréteg'). Katus misquotes the document slightly.

16 Zamoyski memorandum, 10 Nov. 1849, in Hajnal, *A Kossuth-emigráció*, p. 531.

Zamoyski, as he reported to Czartoryski, found much that was vague and confusing in this. Kossuth claimed that each of the nations named 'would have its complete independence, minus the external link of federation needed for common defence.' This, Kossuth continued, 'would put Serbia at the level of Croatia and both at the level of Poland.' But, Zamoyski wondered, what was meant here by Serbia — the Vojvodina within Hungary, or the Principality of Serbia and vassal-state of the Sultan? Zamoyski was inclined to think the former, since Kossuth seemed opposed to the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire.¹⁷ The Hungarian made it obvious that he regarded Hungarians, Poles and Italians as natural allies in the current situation; but he acknowledged that there was not much chance of effecting change short of a major international upheaval, in particular a war directed against Russia.¹⁸

At an early stage, too, Kossuth tried to establish links with the government of Serbia. He even wrote personally to the Serbian minister of the interior, Ilija Garašanin, early in 1850, expressing his conviction that 'the future of our country and the various Slav nationalities will only be assured, if they unite on the basis of a strong confederation'.¹⁹ The letter by implication invited Garašanin to set forth his own ideas on Serbo-Hungarian cooperation.²⁰ By June 1850, however, in a letter to Teleki, Kossuth was referring to the 'North-East Confederal Free States', made up of Poland, Bohemia, Croatia, Romania and Hungary, whose federal capital and executive would be based somewhere in Hungary.²¹ The exclusion of the Ottoman Empire's South Slavs, at this stage, and indeed the proposal of a defensive alliance between the new confederation and the Ottomans, undoubtedly reflected the fact that, until September 1851, Kossuth was effectively interned in Turkey.²²

The opportunities seemingly offered by the Crimean War gave a further impetus to Hungarian ideas about confederation. In 1855 Kossuth's associate, General György Klapka, published in French, German and English a more elaborate plan, in which the emphasis was now much more firmly on Hungary and south-eastern Europe, and which

17 Ibid.

18 Ibid., p. 533.

19 Kossuth & Kázmér Batthyány to Garašanin, 18 Jan. 1850, *ibid.*, no. 104, p. 664; see also Katus, 'A magyar politikai vezetőréteg', p. 149, and note 8; Mérei, 'Föderationspläne', p. 17.

20 Hajnal, *A Kossuth-emigráció*, p. 533.

21 Kossuth to Teleki, 15 June 1850, in Horváth, *Teleki László*, ii, no. 67; Katus, 'A magyar politikai vezetőréteg', p. 149.

22 Đorđević, 'Projects', pp. 126–27; Deak, *The Lawful Revolution*, pp. 340–42.

excluded the Poles and Czechs from the equation, in part because the Hungarian emigration now fully supported the restoration of an independent Poland.²³ The Klapka plan saw three core 'states' in this Danubian confederation: historic Hungary, plus a South Slav state based on Serbia, and a Romanian state based on the two Romanian Principalities. The eventual adhesion of Bosnia and Montenegro was also envisaged. Although Klapka referred to 'a strong federative state', his description made it clear that the separate interests, history and traditions of the peoples inhabiting the three constituent units 'do not reasonably permit thinking of a fusion into a single, centralized state.'²⁴ There was thus no question of federalizing the Hungarian state, still less of transferring territory to the others, although Klapka was prepared at least to consider an autonomous status for Croatia and Transylvania, within Hungary. Each state would be fully independent and autonomous within its own territory, with only foreign affairs, defence and external trade and customs in the hands of a federal superstructure.²⁵

The fundamentally flawed premise underlying the Klapka plan was revealed by the end of the Crimean War: even this major international conflict had not sufficiently disrupted the state system to permit so wide-ranging a scheme to be realized. Nothing daunted, the Hungarian emigration continued to seek to exploit international crises, and of course in 1859 they were encouraged, by Napoleon III and the Piedmontese government, to form the Hungarian Legion and to hold themselves in readiness for an attack on the Habsburg Monarchy.²⁶ Nothing came of this; but in the course of 1859 the Hungarians once again made specific proposals to both the Serbian and Romanian governments, to which we shall return.

In 1862 the final and most complex of the Hungarian plans for Danubian confederation was launched. What came to be known as the 'Kossuth plan' was in fact originally drafted by Klapka, with the collaboration of

23 Georges Klapka, *La Guerre d'Orient en 1853 et 1854, jusqu'à la fin de juillet 1855 ...*, Geneva, London & Paris, 1855, pp. 177–79 (hereafter *La Guerre d'Orient*). See also Mérei, 'Föderationspläne', pp. 19–21; Đorđević, 'Projects', pp. 125–26.

24 Klapka, *La Guerre d'Orient*, pp. 177–78.

25 Ibid., p. 178; Mérei, 'Föderationspläne', p. 20.

26 Pásztor, *La Confederazione*, pp. 33–36; Angelo Tamborra, 'La politica serba del Regno di Sardegna 1856–1861', *Rassegna storica del Risorgimento*, 38, 1951, 1–2, pp. 43–72 (p. 53); Kosáry, *History of the Hungarian Nation*, pp. 155–56; Ljiljana Aleksić-Pejković, *Politika Italije prema Srbiji do 1870. godine*, Belgrade, 1979, pp. 65–67 (hereafter *Politika Italije*).

Ferencz Pulszky and the Italian Mazzinian nationalist, Marc Antonio Canini. Kossuth, however, although he objected to the plan's publication in May 1862, never seriously dissented from its details, as the work of Lajos Lukács clearly demonstrates.²⁷

The 1862 plan represented a considerable advance on Klapka's thinking in 1855. While Magyars, South Slavs and Romanians were still seen as the core peoples, there were now seven states: Hungary, Croatia, Transylvania, Slavonia, Dalmatia, plus Serbia and Romania. As before the option was held open of other 'states' such as Bosnia and Montenegro joining later. The formation of a Serbian or Romanian nation-state was thus, as before, implicitly excluded; but on the other hand Kossuth and his associates had clearly renounced the territorial integrity of the historic Hungarian state as well. The confederation would have a common foreign policy, defence and customs, transport and communications system, currency and even weights and measures. There was to be a common executive council, and a bicameral federal parliament. The capital, or to be more precise the organs of central government, would alternate every two years between Budapest, Zagreb, Belgrade and Bucharest; and the official language at federal level would be French. Below the federal level, each state would have full internal autonomy: in short, its own government, laws and representative system. In particular, issues of nationality were to be regulated by the laws of individual states. Any powers not specifically reserved to the federal authority were considered automatically to be the preserve of the states.²⁸

We shall shortly consider what reception this complicated, but in many respects imaginative and high-minded, proposal met with in Serbia. It is worth reminding ourselves, however, that the Hungarian emigration's plans were being evolved against a background which included not only international crises, but a continuing debate within Hungary itself about relations with the non-Magyar nationalities on the one hand, and the Habsburg Monarchy on the other. In this context, which was constantly changing after the 1859 war, it is equally important to stress that the

27 The French original of the plan is published in *I Documenti diplomatici italiani*, 1st series: 1861–1870, 7 vols, Rome, 1952–83, i, no. 253, pp. 293–95; Italian text published in Pásztor, *La Confederazione*, pp. 97–99. See also Lajos Lukács, *Magyar politikai emigráció 1849–1867*, Budapest, 1984, pp. 202–15 (hereafter *Magyar politikai emigráció*); for the critical edition of the texts see Gábor Pajkossy, 'Az 1862. évi Duna-konföderációs tervezet dokumentumai', *Századok*, 136, 2002, pp. 937–57; see also Mérei, 'Föderationspläne', pp. 25–30; Đorđević, 'Projects', pp. 129–30.

28 Lukács, *Magyar politikai emigráció*, pp. 204–06.

governments of all the autonomous Balkan principalities, including Serbia, maintained links not only with their co-nationals in Hungary, but with the domestic Hungarian leadership as well.²⁹ As the 1860s wore on, it became increasingly evident to these Balkan observers that the real centre of Hungarian politics lay in Hungary, rather than with Kossuth in Turin.

II: Serbia

Serbia in the 1850s and '60s posed more of a theoretical threat to peace in the Balkans than a real one. The Principality was small, and would have fitted into the Habsburg Monarchy a score of times. Its population still numbered only a million, the vast majority of whom made their living off the land, in a country with no modern infrastructure.³⁰ Even in the 1860s Serbia's official military capacity was a sham, rather like the frog that inflates itself to twice its size to impress its enemies. The Prince of Serbia, though autonomous, was still a vassal of the Sultan and obliged to pay a yearly tribute on pain of condign punishment. Ottoman garrisons occupied the main fortified towns of Serbia down to 1867.

Yet both the Habsburg and Ottoman Empires, and many of the Hungarian leadership at home and abroad, feared what Serbia might yet become. A greater Serbia would be a power to reckon with, especially since it could only aggrandize at the expense of its neighbours to south and north. Even if its expansion were prevented, Serbia's strategic importance could only grow, and from the 1830s all the major powers maintained consulates at Belgrade, which became one of the diplomatic listening-posts of Europe. Both the intended regulation of the Danube as an international waterway, and the pressure to complete a rail link between central Europe and Constantinople, made the powers all the more anxious to secure some form of influence in Serbia.

29 Katus, 'A magyar politikai vezetőréteg', pp. 153–54. The contacts between the Serbian government and the Hungarian opposition to the neo-absolutist regime in the 1860s are abundantly documented in, *inter alia*, Vojislav J. Vučković (ed.), *Politika akcija Srbije u južnoslovenskim pokrajinama Habsburške Monarhije 1859–1874*, Belgrade, 1965 (hereafter *Politička akcija Srbije*); see especially nos. 25 (pp. 38–39), 27–29 (pp. 40–41), 30–38 (pp. 44–52).

30 F. Kanitz, *Serbien. Historisch-ethnographische Reisestudien aus den Jahren 1859–1868*, Leipzig, 1868, still one of the most valuable contemporary sources, gives a figure for 1866 of 1,192,086, p. 552. For a comprehensive account of Serbia in this period, see Michael Boro Petrovich, *A History of Modern Serbia 1804–1918*, 2 vols., New York, 1976, i, ch. iv, *passim*. (Hereafter *A History of Modern Serbia*).

Serbian governments had their own nationalist agenda, but as it happened it was focused on the Ottoman Empire, not the Habsburg Monarchy, or rather southern Hungary. The classic statement of Serbian nationalist priorities was Ilija Garašanin's *Načertanije* or 'outline' of 1844.³¹ Garašanin is important in our story not just because he was a prominent minister in the 1840s and 1850s, and Serbian minister president from 1861 to 1867, but because he articulated a more coherent and aggressive nationalism, which was directed chiefly against Ottoman rule, but was also strongly anti-Austrian. The *Načertanije* was directly influenced by other Slav nationalists, in particular Czartoryski, who had singled out the Serbs as the only Balkan people who, because of the very existence of Serbia, might unite the Peninsula against Russian domination. One way or another, Czartoryski felt, Serbia must take over as the principal power in the region; ideally this should involve other South Slavs, including the Catholic Croats.³² Garašanin, however, was less interested than Czartoryski in grandiose visions of 'Yugoslav' unity, and concentrated more on the practical options open to Serbia.³³ This entailed recognizing that the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire in Europe was unlikely to be achieved peacefully, and that the only rational strategy for Serbia was a policy aiming at withdrawal of Ottoman garrisons, armament, alliance with other Balkan states, and staged uprisings of Balkan Christians under Ottoman rule. In addition Garašanin, like Cavour in Piedmont, realized that Serbia had to enlist the influence of a great power in this enterprise, and that this power was likely to be Russia, even though Garašanin had no desire to see Serbia permanently under Russian influence.³⁴ With the Habsburg Monarchy, by contrast, there could be no such

31 Serbo-Croat text in József Thim, *A magyarországi 1848–49-iki szerb fölkelés története*, 3 vols., Budapest 1930–40, iii, no. 1, pp. 1–14 (hereafter *A magyarországi 1848–49-iki szerb fölkelés története*); English translation in Paul N. Huhn, 'The Origins of Modern Pan-Serbism — The 1844 *Načertanije* of Ilija Garašanin: An Analysis and Translation', *East European Quarterly*, 9, 1975, 2, pp. 153–71 (pp. 158–69) (hereafter 'The Origins of Modern Pan-Serbism'). See also Petrovich, *A History of Modern Serbia*, p. 233; and Charles Jelavich, 'Garašanins *Načertanije* und das großserbische Programm', *Südost-forschungen*, 27, 1968, pp. 131–47 (hereafter 'Garašanins *Načertanije*').

32 David MacKenzie, *Ilija Garašanin: Balkan Bismarck*, New York, 1985, pp. 46–47, 47–54 (hereafter *Ilija Garašanin*); Vaso Čubrilović, *Istorija političke misli u Srbiji XIX veka*, Belgrade, 1982 [1958]), pp. 130–31, 131–34.

33 This insight is the important contribution of Jelavich, 'Garašanins *Načertanije*', pp. 143–47.

34 MacKenzie, *Ilija Garašanin*, p. 55; Petrovich, *A History of Modern Serbia*, pp. 231–33.

accommodation. Because of the Monarchy's fears that a South Slav state would be built out of Habsburg territory, 'Austria [...] must in all circumstances be the eternal enemy of the Serbian state.'³⁵

As is well known, there was no love lost between Serbia and the Hungarians in the 1840s, because of the position of the Serb minority in southern Hungary. In May 1848 the Vojvodina Serbs appealed directly to Belgrade for help; in response Garašanin wrote that 'We regard the cause of our brethren [...] as our own.'³⁶ Serbia acted as a conduit for arms to the Hungarian Serbs, and between five and eight thousand volunteers crossed over to fight against the Hungarians in 1848–49.³⁷ At the same time, as a vassal-state of the Sultan, Serbia was obliged to keep a low profile; and it is clear from other comments by Garašanin that the Serbian government regarded the entire Hungarian war as a digression from Serbia's normal policy of pursuing the end of Ottoman rule.³⁸ Involvement in the fighting in Hungary was seen as an unavoidable distraction; certainly there is no evidence that Garašanin considered the disintegration of the Habsburg Monarchy as imminent. And when, in May 1849, the Hungarian government despatched Count Gyula András to Belgrade in an attempt to improve relations, Garašanin was polite but non-committal. Despite András's claim that the Serbian minister was 'sincerely in favour of an alliance with Hungary', despite Garašanin's assurance that 'he had always wanted the union of the two nations', András came away empty-handed.³⁹ There was certainly no attempt by either party, at this stage, to discuss the even more wide-ranging ideas about confederation floated by Teleki in Paris.

In Hungary itself, the situation was transformed by the defeat of the Hungarians and the imposition of neo-absolutist rule on all nationalities of the Monarchy. Overnight, the Serbs of southern Hungary were converted from the bitter foes of the Hungarians to their companions in misfortune, a

35 Garašanin's *Načertanije*, in Thim, *A magyarországi 1848–49-iki szerb fölkelés története*, p. 2; cf. the translation by Hehn, 'The Origins of Modern Pan-Serbism', p. 159.

36 Garašanin to Đorđe Stratimirović, 17/29 May 1848, in Grgur Jakšić (ed.), *Prepiska Ilike Garašanina*, i (only volume published). 1839–1849, Belgrade, 1950, p. 157 (hereafter *Prepiska Ilike Garašanina*); MacKenzie, *Ilija Garašanin*, p. 97.

37 Ibid., pp. 99–100, 101; Petrovich, *A History of Modern Serbia*, p. 245.

38 See, for example, Garašanin to Knićanin, 9/21 Jan. 1849, in Jakšić, *Prepiska Ilike Garašanina*, no. 268, p. 355; wrongly cited by MacKenzie, *Ilija Garašanin*, p. 105, as no. 269, p. 335.

39 András to Kázmér Batthyány, 11 June 1849, in Thim, *A magyarországi 1848–49-iki szerb fölkelés története*, iii, no. 822, pp. 788, 789. A Hungarian translation of the French original is in Horváth, *Teleki László*, ii, no. 55, pp. 184–87.

situation which created at least the possibility of political cooperation.⁴⁰ The Serbian government, for its part, maintained links with both sides, while continuing to concentrate on affairs within the Ottoman Empire.

III: The Hungarian Emigration and Serbia

The links between Serbia and the Hungarian emigration, on the other hand, were altogether more episodic. Although Belgrade, in view of its position within the Ottoman Empire, refused asylum to Hungarian refugees fleeing Habsburg territory in 1849, a more positive note had been sounded when the Serbian government facilitated the escape of Kossuth's wife, who was able to join him at Vidin.⁴¹ Kossuth personally had a high opinion of Garašanin, not least because of the latter's record of hostility to the Habsburg Monarchy.⁴² As we have seen, the emigration's hopes of solving the Hungarian question increasingly posited cooperation with other nationalities, and their attitude towards Serbia was inevitably conditioned by the Principality's potential as a springboard for launching either an invasion of Hungary or as a base for fomenting revolution. The only problem was that both the Habsburg and the Ottoman governments were perfectly aware of this, and consequently monitored events in Belgrade closely.

Certainly the Serbian government displayed an understandable caution in its dealings with Kossuth. When, at the start of 1850, Kossuth sent his first ideas about Danubian confederation to Garašanin, via the Italian Giuseppe Carrosini, there was no clear response.⁴³ Garašanin appears to have promised Carrosini 'to work out a detailed outline' for future cooperation; but given the complete powerlessness of the Hungarian émigrés at this point, it is not surprising that nothing came of this.⁴⁴

40 C. A. Macartney, *The Habsburg Empire 1790–1918*, London, 1969, pp. 446–47, 449; Vasilije Krestić, 'A magyarországi szerbek politikai törekvései és a magyarok (1849–1867)', in István Fried (ed.), *Szerbek és magyarok a Duna mentén*, II: *Tanulmányok a szerb-magyar kapcsolatok köréből 1848–1867*, Budapest, 1987, pp. 129–46 (pp. 129–30, 131).

41 Kossuth to Garašanin, 18 Jan. 1850, in Hajnal, *A Kossuth-emigráció*, no. 102, pp. 659–61; Mérei, 'Föderationspläne', p. 16.

42 Katus, 'A magyar politikai vezetőréteg', p. 152.

43 Kossuth & Kázmér Batthyány to Garašanin, 18 Jan. 1850, in Hajnal, *A Kossuth-emigráció*, no. 104, pp. 663–64 (cited above, note 19); see also Kossuth's instructions to Carrosini, 19 Jan. 1850, *ibid.*, no. 111, pp. 671–77.

44 Mérei, 'Föderationspläne', p. 17; Hajnal, *A Kossuth-emigráció*, introduction, p. 372.

What is interesting about Kossuth's proposals of 1850, the first in which he embraced the idea of confederation, was how contradictory and hedged about with conditions they were. While acknowledging his conversion to the principle that Hungary's free existence could only be assured if it remodelled itself as a federation, Kossuth insisted that Hungary must remain a unitary state, one with which Serbia could unite if it so wished. Within Hungary, however, all Serbs would be merely assured of 'political and national freedoms and rights'; there was no question of autonomy. On the other hand, Kossuth was ready to contemplate the independence of Croatia-Slavonia, as long as Hungary retained Fiume. A union of Serbia with Croatia and/or Slavonia was sanctioned, but in no circumstances could this be extended to include the Banat or the Bácska. To cap it all, Kossuth stressed that for him 'the interests of the Sublime Porte are sacred' — which was a reasonable enough profession for someone interned on Ottoman soil, but was hardly like to commend itself to the government of Serbia.⁴⁵

There was even less heard from the Serbian side in 1855, when Klapka's plan was published, nor, given the circumstances, is it hard to see why. Russia's defensive war in the Crimea effectively eliminated it from the picture, and although the Ottomans were also preoccupied with the War, other great power involvement in the Balkans was constant. From mid-1854 the Habsburg Monarchy was occupying Moldavia and Wallachia, and the threat of an occupation of Serbia was a real one.⁴⁶ Prince Alexander Karadžorđević, never the strongest of personalities, was utterly dominated by the Austrian consul, while Garašanin, excluded from government in this period, could only fume, in July 1856, that 'Serbia can never count on anyone's help, and that which she cannot create for herself, she can never expect from another.'⁴⁷ Nor is there much evidence that the Hungarian emigration was in a position to take advantage of the Crimean War.

The Italian War of 1859, however, provided an 'object lesson' in the perils for Serbia when, for a change, the Hungarian emigration was full of hopes that a grand re-ordering was about to commence. The cooperation of the Romanian and Serbian governments was actively sought, not just by the Hungarians but, briefly, by Napoleon III and the Piedmontese

⁴⁵ Kossuth's instructions to Carrosini, 19 Jan. 1850, *ibid.*, pp. 672, 673, 676–77; see also Mérei, 'Föderationspläne', p. 16.

⁴⁶ MacKenzie, *Ilija Garašanin*, pp. 151–54.

⁴⁷ Garašanin to Marinović, 3/15 July 1856, in Jakšić, *Prepiska Ilije Garašanina*, pp. 307–08; MacKenzie, *Ilija Garašanin*, p. 156.

government. Both Cavour and Napoleon III, before the outbreak of hostilities on 26 April, were conscious of the advantages of fomenting a Hungarian revolt in Austria's backyard, and Cavour at least seems to have regarded the break-up of the entire Habsburg Monarchy as the inevitable consequence of such an uprising. 'If it works,' he wrote to Prince Napoleon, the Emperor's cousin, in January 1859, 'Austria is finished: deprived of Italy and her Hungarian and Slav provinces, she will be left completely helpless.'⁴⁸ General Klapka was recruited to lead a Hungarian legion which would invade Hungary at the given moment. For this, however, the cooperation of both Serbia and the recently united Principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia was essential. The Piedmontese government accordingly appointed its first consuls to Belgrade and Bucharest, appointments suggested by Kossuth; Klapka paid a flying visit to Belgrade in April and, for a few months anything seemed possible.⁴⁹ The consul for Belgrade, Francesco Astengo, arrived at his post in March 1859; on the 23rd he was received by Prince Miloš and, encouraged by the latter's obvious hostility to Austria, immediately broached the project for a Hungarian uprising. Would the Serbian government assist Klapka and his troops?⁵⁰

The Serbian government, headed by the recently restored Prince Miloš Obrenović and his son Michael, was in a terrible dilemma. Without any guarantees of support against the probable enmity of Austria and Turkey, Serbia was being asked to incite both Hungarians and Hungarian Serbs to revolt. Astengo even expressed the hope that, if Britain should join on the side of Austria, Serbia would stir up Turkey's Christian population to revolt as well. Miloš and Michael, the next day, replied that Serbia would not itself take part in an intervention on Austrian soil because of a lack of arms; nevertheless, they agreed in principle to facilitate the supply of arms and supplies to the insurgent forces in Hungary.⁵¹ On 27 March, Miloš sent Michael on a tour of the European capitals to discover how far Serbia's involvement would be tolerated, if at all.

The answers justified Miloš's and Michael's trepidation. In Vienna the Russian ambassador, Balabin, advised Serbia to wait and see. The present

48 Cavour to Prince Napoleon, 7 Jan. 1859, in Frédéric Masson, 'L'Italie libérée (1857–1862): Lettres et dépêches du roi Victor Emmanuel II et du comte de Cavour au prince Napoléon', *Revue des deux mondes*, 13, 1923, p. 45; Grgur Jakšić & Vojislav J. Vučković, *Spoljna politika Srbije za vlade Kneza Mihaila (prvi balkanski savez)*, Belgrade, 1963, p. 20 (hereafter *Spoljna politika Srbije*).

49 Hermann Wendel, *Bismarck und Serbien im Jahre 1866*, Berlin, 1927, p. 27.

50 Jakšić & Vučković, *Spoljna politika Srbije*, p. 21.

51 Ibid., pp. 22–23.

crisis, if it came to war between Austria, France and Sardinia, might also lead to a general war involving Turkey, and in that case Serbian involvement would be feasible, and would even, Balabin promised, secure the Principality possession of Bosnia-Hercegovina. For the present, however, 'we must above all preserve what we have.'⁵²

In Paris, Michael found that Napoleon III was willing to promise no more than diplomatic support for various Serbian grievances against the Porte. The arrangements between the Piedmontese government, Prince Napoleon and the Hungarian emigration, though undertaken with the Emperor's consent, had not been known even to the French foreign minister, Walewski. Now, as Walewski pointedly informed his consul in Belgrade, the French government would have nothing to do with a Hungarian uprising.⁵³ It had to take into account the possibility that a Franco-Piedmontese attack on Austria, which threatened the status quo in the Near East, was likely to bring Britain into the struggle in defence of the Ottoman Empire.⁵⁴ Michael left a memorandum for Napoleon III in which he offered Serbia's cooperation against Turkey and Austria but, sensibly, only in return for a formal alliance; this was not taken up by the French government.⁵⁵ Prince Michael advised his father in April 1859 to keep the peace 'at all costs'.⁵⁶

In London, the British Conservative government's disapproval of any departure by Serbia from strict neutrality was plain to see. Prince Michael also met Kossuth in London in May; but the encounter only confirmed the inadvisability of getting involved. Kossuth was under the impression that Napoleon III was actively promoting a Hungarian rebellion; in any case the Serbian government, he claimed, should be willing to help Hungary, since an independent Hungary was in Serbia's own interests. This confusion on the part of the Hungarian emigration, again, appears to have been due more to the wishful thinking of Prince Napoleon, who happened to be an uncle of King Victor Emmanuel of Sardinia-Piedmont, than to practical considerations.⁵⁷

52 Kosta Cukić to Miloje Lešjanin, 20 Mar./1 Apr. 1859, in Vučković, *Politička akcija Srbije*, no. 3, p. 9; Jakšić & Vučković, *Spoljna politika Srbije*, pp. 22–24.

53 Walewski to des Essards, 21 Apr. 1859, in Vučković, *Politička akcija Srbije*, no. 8, pp. 17–18; Jakšić & Vučković, *Spoljna politika Srbije*, pp. 24–25; Aleksić-Pejković, *Politika Italije*, pp. 69–71.

54 Jakšić & Vučković, *Spoljna politika Srbije*, p. 26.

55 Prince Michael Obrenović to Napoleon III, 16/28 Apr. 1859, in Vučković, *Politička akcija Srbije*, no. 11, p. 21

56 Prince Michael to Prince Miloš, 17/29 Apr. 1859, *ibid.*, no. 12, p. 23.

57 Jakšić & Vučković, *Spoljna politika Srbije*, pp. 32–34.

In the course of their meeting, Prince Michael and Kossuth also discussed the idea of Danubian confederation, but the surviving accounts also bespeak confusion. According to Kossuth's own memoirs, written only two decades after, Prince Michael was personally in favour of Serbo-Hungarian cooperation and Danubian confederation; it was also, according to Kossuth, an understood thing that the sole reward Serbia might expect for helping a Hungarian uprising would be the establishment of an independent Hungary.⁵⁸ By contrast Milan Piroćanac, one of Michael's secretaries in 1859, but writing in 1895, did not dispute Michael's willingness to find common ground with Hungary; but that did not mean that Serbia could afford to act in this case, without some guarantee of survival.⁵⁹

Back in Serbia, with the outbreak of the war on 26 April, the Ottoman government started reinforcing its garrisons in Belgrade and the other Serbian fortress towns as well as in neighbouring Bosnia and Bulgaria. This was a clear response to the rumours of Serbian involvement, which had been fuelled by Klapka's flying visit to Belgrade around 20 April, and by the increasingly eccentric behaviour of old Prince Miloš, whose open Austrophobia was becoming an embarrassment.⁶⁰ Austria, too, despite its preoccupation with the fighting in Italy, was keeping a watchful eye on its southern border. The Austrian ambassador to Constantinople, Baron Anton von Prokesch-Osten, suggested closing the frontier to Serbian trade, as an extremely effective means of checking Serbian provocation. The new foreign minister Count Rechberg, however, was content to rely on the Ottoman government's troop movements, and the restraining influence of Prince Michael on his father.⁶¹ Michael reached Belgrade on 9 June, and his arguments in favour of strict non-involvement were reinforced by Walewski's total repudiation, to the Ottoman government, of any desire to use Klapka to raise a revolt in the Habsburg Monarchy. The wisdom of staying out was amply demonstrated in August when, at the news of the French armistice with Austria at Villafranca, the Piedmontese government abruptly called the whole project off. 'The secret goal of your mission,' Astengo was informed, 'is terminated.'⁶²

58 Lajos Kossuth, *Irataim az emigrációból*, vol. i: *Az 1859-ki olasz háboru korszaka*, 2nd ed., Budapest, 1880, pp. 394, 398.

59 Milan Piroćanac, *Knez Mihailo i zajednička radnja balkanskih naroda*, Belgrade, 1895, pp. 19–21; MacKenzie, *Ilija Garašanin*, p. 242.

60 Dr Pacek to Prince Michael, 12/24 Apr. 1859, in Vučković, *Politička akcija Srbije*, no. 10, pp. 19–21; Jakšić & Vučković, *Spoljna politika Srbije*, pp. 25, 35

61 Prokesch-Osten to Rechberg, 3 June 1859, in Vučković, *Politička akcija Srbije*, no. 16, p. 28.

62 Tamborra, 'La politica serba del Regno di Sardegna 1856–1861', p. 56.

The events of 1859 are worth dwelling on in such detail because they illustrate the problems Serbia faced. From the point of view of the Serbian government, the perils of any close dealings with the Hungarian emigration were all too obvious, so obvious as to make projects for Danubian confederation all the more improbable. By the time the final version of the Danubian confederation scheme became public, in May 1862, the Serbian government under Prince Michael, with Garašanin back in office as minister president, was forging ahead with its plans for Balkan alliances and uprisings. Nevertheless the interchanges between Belgrade and the Hungarian emigration, scant though the records are, are of interest. In the summer of 1862, Kossuth made use of his Italian confidant, Marc Antonio Canini, who was being sent to Bucharest and Belgrade by the Italian government, to elicit the responses of the two main 'associate' peoples to the confederation plan. Once again there were hopes, encouraged by the Italian government, of exploiting the crisis in the Ottoman Empire caused by the uprising in Crete, while simultaneously engineering a confrontation with the Habsburg Monarchy. Serbia's contribution would be to raise an insurrection among the Serbian Border Guards in Hungary.⁶³

Behind the Canini mission there was a tortuous secret history of disagreement among the Hungarian emigration as to the way forward. The 'Kossuth plan' itself, as we have seen, was the outcome of a hurried adoption of the ideas of Klapka, with some of which Kossuth had long been in disagreement. Kossuth nevertheless lent the prestige of his name to the plan when it was published in May 1862.⁶⁴ The problem now was to convince the Hungarians' proposed partners in the project of its feasibility.

Canini was undoubtedly not the aptest choice as envoy in this campaign to win hearts and minds. A former secretary of Mazzini in the revolutionary year of 1848–49, Canini had since made a living as a journalist, residing for a decade in Bucharest before returning to Italy in 1859, after which he joined Garibaldi's movement. He had a long-standing association with both the Polish and Hungarian émigré communities, and played a significant role in drafting and then publishing the 1862 plan. Officially, Canini's mission to the Balkans was to set up an Italian-Romanian cultural society for research into the Roman origins of the Romanians. Unofficially, he was charged by King Victor Emmanuel II, the Italian minister president Ratazzi, and Garibaldi with sounding the

63 On the general background, see Jakšić & Vučković, *Spoljna politika Srbije*, ch. iv and v passim; Aleksić-Pejković, *Politika Italije*, pp. 107–10.

64 Lukács, *Magyar politikai emigráció*, pp. 204–13.

governments of Greece, the Romanian Principalities and Serbia on the possibilities of a coordinated attack on the Habsburg Monarchy and revolt in the Ottoman provinces. Canini, however, was a classic loose cannon. In the words of a Yugoslav historian, he was 'a boastful, vain, garrulous person, completely irresponsible'; and he rapidly made himself so obnoxious wherever he went that his mission soon degenerated into farce.⁶⁵

Before Canini even arrived in the Balkans the Italian government had been forced by the great powers to change course, and had hastily disavowed any intention of meddling in the Ottoman Empire. In the Romanian Principalities Canini aroused suspicions wherever he went, and he was eventually arrested by the Ottoman authorities and all his papers and funds confiscated. He arrived nearly penniless at Belgrade on 25 July, preceded by a hail of indignant diplomatic reports, and shortly after the international crisis touched off by the Ottoman bombardment of Belgrade in June.⁶⁶

In the Romanian Principalities, Canini's mission as exponent of Danubian confederation was the culmination of a series of contacts with the government of Alexandru Cuza since 1859, when the latter was elected prince of both Wallachia and Moldavia. Among the Hungarian émigrés both Klapka and, until his death in 1861, Teleki, were warmer advocates of the Romanian connection than Kossuth who, together with most of the emigration, took especial exception to Klapka's and Teleki's willingness to contemplate a plebiscite over the fate of Transylvania.⁶⁷ Cuza, for his part, was inclined to cooperation with the Hungarians, but had to reckon with serious opposition to this among Romanian politicians like Dumitru Brătianu.⁶⁸ In the end, it was the opponents of cooperation who gained the upper hand, and by 1862 Cuza's government, hoping for great power sanction for a formal union of Wallachia and Moldavia, was frankly unenthusiastic about Danubian confederation.⁶⁹

In Belgrade, the response to the Kossuth plan was if anything even more embarrassing. Canini had some difficulty even achieving an audience with Garašanin, and he was not permitted to see Prince Michael at

65 Aleksić-Pejković, *Politika Italije*, pp. 106–07, and note 56.

66 Ibid., pp. 107, 108; Jakšić & Vučković, *Spoljna politika Srbije*, pp. 107–22.

67 Mérei, 'Föderationspläne', pp. 23–24.

68 Ibid., p. 24.

69 Lukács, *Magyar politikai emigráció*, p. 220; Mérei, 'Föderationspläne', p. 25. See also Strambio (Bucharest) to Durando, 29 July 1862, reporting on Canini's disastrous sojourn in Wallachia, in *I Documenti diplomatici italiani*, 1st series, ii, no. 610, pp. 601–04.

all. Letters which he attempted to have delivered to the prince were intercepted, one being bought by the Italian consul to prevent it falling into the hands of his Austrian colleague.⁷⁰ Nevertheless Canini managed to meet with Garašanin a total of four times, enough to make clear that the Serbian government had no intention of responding to Kossuth's initiative.

Although in his memoirs, written in 1868, Canini claimed that Garašanin 'showed himself well disposed to an understanding with the Hungarians', and informed him that the confederation scheme was received in the Belgrade casino with applause, the reality was otherwise.⁷¹ A rather pathetic letter from Canini to Garašanin, on 29 August, regretted that their interview was cut short, and pleaded for a meeting with the Prince, even 'at night, in secret.'⁷² Kossuth, Canini claimed, disposed of a secret army of 120,000 men; even in Bohemia there was an underground military corps, awaiting the word to rise up. In one of those protestations which amounted to a confession of the opposite, Canini insisted that there was no disagreement between Kossuth and Klapka. 'They are also,' he continued, 'in agreement on the big political questions, such as for example Danubian Confederation, which is proven by the two programmes which contain the same basics.'⁷³ In the Habsburg army, there were 'secret committees' of Serb, Croat and Hungarian officers, on whom the Hungarians and the Serbian government could call. The Italian government still supported the whole project, but had to pretend otherwise officially in order not to alienate Russia. At the end of this wildly inaccurate *plaidoyer*, Canini raised an implied threat: if the Serbian government did not hasten to take advantage of this opportunity, Austrian machinations could mean that Serbs would find themselves once again confronting Hungarians as enemies. 'The natural friends of Serbia,' Canini concluded, 'are the Italians and Hungarians.'⁷⁴

Garašanin's considered response was to ignore the advances of the Hungarians, for reasons which he explained to his representative in Paris, Miloje Lešjanin, early in October 1862. In Garašanin's opinion the Serb

70 Canini to Prince Michael, 17 Aug. 1862, enclosed in Scovasso to Durando, 7 Sept. 1862, in *I Documenti diplomatici italiani*, 1st series, iii, no. 130, pp. 96–8; Aleksić-Pejković, *Politika Italije*, pp. 108–09, and note 60.

71 Katus, 'A magyar politikai vezetőréteg', pp. 150–51, and note 16 (p. 174), citing M. A. Canini, *Vingt ans d'exil*, Paris 1868, pp. 174–75.

72 Canini to Garašanin, 29 Aug. 1962, in Vučković, *Politička akcija Srbije*, no. 53, pp. 88–89.

73 Ibid., p. 89.

74 Ibid., pp. 89, 90.

population of southern Hungary and the Border were unlikely to rise in support of the Hungarians. Despite the recent improvement in Serbo-Hungarian relations within Hungary (something which had nothing to do with the emigration), there was still not much common ground. The two sides would 'have to agree on things that up to now have never been agreed on.'⁷⁵ In the circumstances, it was clear that the Serbian government expected no more from the emigration than it did from the Deákists, which was not saying much. As for the whole idea of Danubian confederation, Garašanin thought that the Hungarian emigration 'made this public too soon. It is necessary to reach an agreement in secret and not *via* the papers.'⁷⁶ But crucially, Garašanin concluded, 'There cannot be a confederation as long as there is an Austria and a Turkey [...] one must proceed in an orderly fashion to eliminate these two and replace them with a different form of government for their peoples.'⁷⁷ In other words, Serbia was obliged to cope with existing realities, which were intractable enough from Belgrade's point of view. Danubian confederation could wait.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is worth noting that the final version of the confederation scheme provoked disagreement even within the emigration. The fact was that the whole idea of confederation, especially if it involved a diminution of Hungary's historic territory, was anathema to most Hungarians, in and out of Hungary. One of Kossuth's associates in London, Sebő Vukovics, advised him on 7 July 1862 that 'I think we should simply drop it, without a word more.'⁷⁸ Kossuth in his reply appeared already to be backing away from the scheme, assuring Vukovics that he agreed that national liberation should be the priority. Vukovics returned to the charge in August, urging an explicit repudiation of the plan, and suggesting a face-saving formula: 'the cleverer ones are saying: we know that this is not Kossuth's wish, but [...] a manoeuvre dictated by circumstances.'⁷⁹ More significant is the effect news of the plan had on public opinion in Hungary, where

⁷⁵ Garašanin to Lešjanin, early Oct. 1862, *ibid.*, no. 54, p. 92.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ *Ibid.* See also Jakšić & Vučković, *Spoljna politika Srbije*, pp. 125–26; Aleksić-Pejković, *Politika Italije*, pp. 108–10.

⁷⁸ Sebő Vukovics to Kossuth, 7 July 1862, quoted in Lukács, *Magyar politikai emigráció*, p. 220.

⁷⁹ Vukovics to Kossuth, 23 Aug. 1862, quoted *ibid.*, p. 221.

according to Lukács the details spread 'with the speed of lightning', and significantly with the apparent encouragement of the otherwise strict Austrian censorship.⁸⁰ Members of the 'Resolution Party' in Budapest, and who maintained discreet contact with the emigration, let Kossuth know in no uncertain terms that they entirely rejected confederation plans.⁸¹ One of the Resolutionists, Frigyes Podmaniczky, confided gloomily to his diary, on 11 June, his conviction that 'If I have to go to the Reichsrat, better go to Vienna among Germans, than to Belgrade among Serbs [rácok].'⁸² Support for Kossuth within Hungary, in so far as this can even be estimated, appears to have diminished, and the thought of this alternative, after 1862, may have inclined Ferencz Deák to seek accommodation with Vienna.⁸³

Even more intangible is the legacy which the Danubian confederation scheme left in the minds of the younger generation of Hungarian politicians. As late as 1868 the young diplomat Benjámin Kállay, at the outset of his posting to Belgrade as Austro-Hungarian consul, could refer to confederation as 'the only possibility for us and for the Christian nations of Turkey'.⁸⁴ Kállay was twenty-eight at this point; and nothing in his subsequent career as diplomat, historian and *k.u.k.* minister suggests that he seriously pursued confederation. On the contrary, it can only be assumed that his conception of confederation involved an unequivocal Hungarian, or in the end Austro-Hungarian hegemony.⁸⁵

The Danubian confederation idea was impracticable, however generously conceived, and the history of the various attempts made to interest the Serbian government in it demonstrate this. There were simply too many obstacles internationally, certainly too many for Belgrade, positioned as it was on the edge of two tectonic plates. But the scheme was

80 Ibid., p. 214; Katus, 'A magyar politikai vezetőréteg', p. 151.

81 Ibid., citing *Deák Ferencz beszédei*, 2nd ed., ed. Manó Kónyi, 6 vols., Budapest, 1903, v, pp. 46–47.

82 Ibid., p. 47; quoted in Katus, 'A magyar politikai vezetőréteg', p. 152.

83 George Barany, 'Hungary: The Uncompromising Compromise', *Austrian History Yearbook*, iii, 1967, pt. 1, pp. 234–59 (pp. 244–45); Macartney, *The Habsburg Empire 1790–1918*, p. 538.

84 *Dnevnik Benjamina Kalaja 1868–1875*, ed. Andrija Radenić, Belgrade & Novi Sad, 1976, entry for 12 May 1868, p. 18; see also entry for 26 June 1868, ibid., p. 44.

85 On Kállay, see Ian D. Armour, *Austro-Hungarian Policy towards Serbia 1867–1871, with Special Reference to Benjámin Kállay*, University of London PhD, 1994, pp. 36–37; Robin Okey, 'A Trio of Hungarian Balkanists: Béni Kállay, István Burián and Lajos Thallóczy in the Age of High Nationalism', *The Slavonic and East European Review*, 80, 2002, pp. 234–66 (pp. 237–41).

also impracticable in terms of delivery, even had the diplomatic conditions been more favourable. For the reaction of Kossuth's fellow exiles, to say nothing of the political leadership in Hungary, suggests that the original proposals might well have been watered down in the long run. It is true that pyramid salesmen often believe their own sales pitch, but that does not mean one has to believe them. The proof of the pie in the sky is in the eating.

A Comment on Dr. Armour's Paper, 'Kossuth's Pie in the Sky: Serbia and the Great Danubian Confederation Scam'

Robin Okey

Dr Armour has given a lucid and very largely persuasive account of the Kossuth's Danubian confederation plans in the mid-nineteenth century as they concerned the Serbs. The purpose of these comments is not really to challenge his pessimistic assessment of a famous episode. They touch on two aspects of the matter, one tangential, the other more central to his theme. The first is the nature and constraints of émigré politics; the second probes the implications of Dr Armour's confessedly provocative term 'scam' to ask whether something be rescued of the view of the confederal plans as a significant point in Kossuth's career.

It could be argued that the manoeuvrings over Danubian confederation, which Dr Armour describes, belong more to the theme of émigré politics than of meaningful Hungaro-Serb relations. The very fact of exile constrains émigrés to turn to other countries in their political combinations in ways that would not arise if they remained at home. Times of international tension offer apparent opportunities for these combinations to succeed, but the long history of the Polish cause in the nineteenth century shows the frustration regularly involved, matched in the twentieth century by the calculations of Ukrainian émigrés or Kurds. Federal or confederal schemes seem to be popular in émigré politics because they offer scenarios for cooperation which avoid hard questions about the ultimate disposition of power. The Polish-Czech confederal schemes of the Second World War, which glided over the issue of Teschen (Těšín, Cieszyn), and vaguer talk of Balkan federation, where Macedonia posed the same ambiguities as Transylvania, are cases in point. Of course, émigré politics has not always been unproductive, as the role of the Slav exiles in the First World War showed. Even this role's importance has been questioned, however, and it did not entail seeking amity, like Kossuth, between historically suspicious neighbours, but invoking third party support against them. Where the Slav

émigrés did try for a historical reconciliation, as the Yugoslav Committee tried with Italy, they hardly succeeded.

Thus emigration is rarely a good starting point for a realistic politics. Dr Armour stresses that the Serbian government was more interested in the Hungarian politicians in Hungary than in Kossuth's exiled cohorts. Politicians on the ground are more likely to mean what they say and are in a better position to deliver. The Hungarians who successfully internationalized their cause in 1790–91 had the advantage of a home base. This factor of location has often been relevant in modern Central European history. Notoriously, Tomáš Masaryk disavowed the 1918 Pittsburg Declaration offering autonomy for Slovaks in a Czechoslovak state on the grounds that he had concluded it as a mere private citizen; Sikorski refused to discuss Poland's frontiers in visiting Moscow in December 1941 because only the Homeland could decide such matters; Beneš was swayed in negotiations with his fellow exile, the Sudeten German socialist Jaksch, by the mounting hatred of Germans back home. The exiled Sikorski and Beneš were heads of widely recognized governments and their responsibilities made them cognizant of the limitations on their freedom of action; in Masaryk's case, closer to Kossuth's, a man renowned for his uprightness was simply disingenuous. All three cases show the pitfalls of trying to negotiate the region's ethnic minefield from afar.

My second comment concerns Dr Armour's judgement on the Danubian confederation scheme as 'essentially futile and impracticable'. The sharpness of 'scam', with its implication of bad faith, is later softened by phrases like 'well-meant but unrealizable' and the characterisation of the 1862 proposal as 'in many respects imaginative and high-minded'. The remarks above about the inconsequentiality of much émigré politics would imply support for the harsher verdict. After all, Hungaro-Serb relations had a bad track record. The Serb settlement of southern Hungary from the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries had been a significant factor in reducing Magyars proper to a minority in their historic territories, while Hungarian Serbs traditionally saw Magyar feudalism as an unmixed evil and looked more hopefully to the central Habsburg administration, as in 1848; on that occasion Kossuth had notoriously said of them that he would not negotiate with rebels. In this context a strong *prima facie* case can be made that Kossuth's later relations with Serbs were dictated by convenience rather than the conquering of traditional distance. Calling Serbs 'a band of robbers' would no doubt echo disagreeably in Serbian ears, wrote one of his agents in 1859, but the fact itself was historically true.¹

1 L. Kossuth, *Memories of My Exile*, London, 1880, p. 344.

Moreover, Dr Armour's stimulating doctoral thesis on the role of Béni Kállay as Austro-Hungarian General Consul in Belgrade from 1868 to 1874 tellingly illustrates the limits of contemporary Hungaro-Serb understanding.² The Serb-speaking and in all eyes Serbophile Kállay, later Austro-Hungarian Joint Finance Minister, rested his Serbophilia on the premise that the Serbian government could be weaned off links to the Hungarian Serbs, the Russians and the Croats through promises of Habsburg support for its acquisition of Bosnia. The premise was dubious and the promises undeliverable and in the long run insincere; when the 'Bosnian scheme' misfired, Kállay began to obstruct Serbian aspirations at every point. Even when confiding his ideal of a Danubian confederation to his diary he notes how he and his leading confidant in the Serbian government were each hiding their hegemonic goals from the other.³ Dr Armour's view of the Danubian confederal schemes reflects awareness of this syndrome of the age of nationalism, in which even the apparent advocates of inter-ethnic cooperation saw their neighbours as raw material for their own sacred national egoism. Hence the view in his present contribution that the Hungarian exiles were asking Serbs to join their anti-Austrian movement without anything in return.

This may just be putting it slightly strongly. As Dr Armour suggests Hungarian attitudes were not uniform: a spectrum rather than a single syndrome. While the conservative Kecskeméthy argued in the 1850s that Magyars had more to gain from Austria than from the nationalities and exiled figures like Pulszky, Teleki and Szemere were prepared to modify the unitary nature of the Hungarian state, Kossuth was closer to the latter but believed, as he told Klapka in 1861, that the price for non-Magyar support might be too high.⁴ This implies he was prepared to give something, and far from dissociating himself with radical Danubian confederal plans which were in origin Klapka's he seems to have sought to lay claim to priority on the issue.⁵ True, he did not offer the Serbs the collective territorial autonomy they demanded in southern Hungary, but then they were not a majority in the coveted area. He was willing for Serbs to have two language-drawn counties immediately after the 1848–49 revolution and the 1862 proposals allowed for universal suffrage and any language

2 I. D. Armour, *Austro-Hungarian Policy towards Serbia 1867–71, with special reference to Benjamin Kállay*, University of London Ph.D., 1994.

3 A. Radenić ed., *Dnevnik Benjamina Kalaja 1868–75*, Belgrade, 1976, p. 44.

4 L. Katus, 'A magyar politikai vezetöréteg a délszláv kérdésről 1849–1867 között' in I. Fried (ed.), *Szerbek és magyarok a Duna mentén. II. Tanulmányok a szerb-magyar kapcsolatok köréből 1848–1867*, Budapest, 1987, p. 148.

5 L. Lukács, *Magyar politikai emigració 1849–1867*, Budapest, 1984, p. 216.

to be spoke in the central parliament, concessions never approached in practice till historic Hungary's collapse in 1918. Hungarian Serb secession was not a serious Serbian goal in the 1860s and the fact that Kossuth supported Hungarian state integrity could have surprised no-one. Though Dr Armour rightly notes Garašanin's preoccupation with the Ottoman empire, the Hungarian Serbs remained, too, a very important part of Serbdom at this time. Only in the 1860s did Novi Sad (Újvidék) definitely lose out to Belgrade as the leading Serbian cultural centre. Finally, from the standpoint of contemporary liberalism at its most enlightened in the area, as represented by Eötvös, the fact that Serbs were trying to build a political autonomy out of old-style religious privileges (the Leopoldine concessions to the Orthodox church of 1690) was a further reason for not yielding all that was asked.⁶

These are possible grounds for Katus's suggestion that the Serb and Romanian autonomy demands of 1867 were not so far from the proposals of Kossuth and the centralistic liberals.⁷ Of course, these politicians were not representative of mainstream Hungarian opinion. Yet the implication at the end of Dr Armour's paper that it was Kossuth who was living in cloud-cuckoo land may be taken up in a conference on Kossuth's anniversary. After all, Kossuth's conviction that the reactionary Habsburg Monarchy had had its day — on which he based his strategy of alliance with the new nations on its borders — proved to be correct. From a longer perspective of Hungarian history, 1918 is a more significant date than 1867. The decision of those opting for Dualism to lock Hungary into the fortunes of the anachronistic empire was open to many of Kossuth's criticisms. It may be objected that there is too much hindsight in this view, but there is a place for the visionary in politics, and at least the negative side of Kossuth's vision cannot be denied reality. In 1918 historic Hungary was broken on the wheel of the aspirations of its 'nationalities'. The positive side of the vision, that a settlement could be reached with Hungary's neighbours which preserved the essence of historic Hungary, is more questionable, but Kossuth may surely be allowed his place among those historical figures who saw wider than their contemporaries and did envisage a radical shift in the existing order. The man whose bold combinations were being formulated in part conjunction with Mazzini and Garibaldi's dream of a Europe of the Peoples, who pushed the emancipation of the serfs well beyond original intentions in 1848–49 and who lectured on advanced economic ideas in exile co-exists with the gentry

6 Ibid., p. 167.

7 Ibid., p. 171.

leader to which A. J. P. Taylor somewhat crudely reduced him.⁸ None of the aspects of his remarkable career can be discounted. Like another famous Hungarian icon, the Rubik cube, Kossuth is infuriatingly difficult to pin down.

⁸ For Kossuth's interest in contemporary economic ideas, see R.A. Horvath, 'Kossuth's Views on Economics in his Lectures on National Economics at London University', *Journal of European Economic History*, 2, 1973, pp. 339–54. For Taylor, A.J.P. Taylor, *The Habsburg Monarchy, 1809–1918*, 2nd ed., London, 1948, pp. 51–2.

Kossuth in Exile and Marx

Klára Kingston-Tiszai

The focus of this essay is on Kossuth's adversaries in exile and, in particular, of Karl Marx. Marx went to great lengths to exploit every opportunity to disqualify Kossuth as a valid representative of Hungary and of European liberty, and he did so by misrepresenting facts and by belittling Kossuth at every turn. And Marx found plenty of willing accomplices, including a number of Hungarian émigrés.

The European order which emerged from the treaties of Vienna of 1814–15 served only the interests of the 'northern courts' of Vienna, Berlin and St Petersburg. The three northern powers did not abandon their policies of social and political coercion even in the aftermath of the February Revolution in France in 1848. Indeed, Austria pressed on and imposed anew its administrative system on the north Italian states and, through the 'Bach' system, sought a new measure of hegemony over its Central European possessions. The outcome was a seething discontent which spilled over into periodic violence and confrontation. In Britain, by contrast, social order was guaranteed by constitutional monarchy. Even movements of social protest, such as Chartist, failed to upset the social order.¹

Such was the environment in which the émigré Kossuth sought to promote the cause of Hungarian liberty. He knew that he largely owed his release from internment in Turkey to public opinion in Britain and he recognized that, if he was to achieve any results there, he needed to rally to his side the wealthier and more influential sections of British society.

Kossuth was often criticized by fellow exiles, and also by Marx, for 'usurping' the title of governor and thus for appointing himself sole representative of the Hungarian cause. Undoubtedly, there were many other outstanding leaders of the Hungarian revolution who could have fulfilled this role just as well, but at the time these men were largely unknown

¹ Klara Kingston. 'Gunboat Liberalism? Palmerston, Europe and 1848', *History Today*, 47, 1997, 2, pp. 37–43 (pp. 38–9).

outside Hungary. There was only one name that resonated through the columns of the international press and in the corridors of international diplomacy, and that was Kossuth's. It was up to him, therefore, and no one else to rally support for the liberty of his country, by hook or by crook, even to the extent, as he himself put it, of 'allying himself with the devil'.

It was precisely this Machiavellian approach which Marx criticized. At the time, however, Marx was himself unknown internationally. He was an émigré journalist who wrote for the most part articles of a sensationalist and 'tabloid' character. Although some of Marx's criticisms of Kossuth were doubtless valid, they were also coloured by his own desire for acclaim. Moreover, by his choice of target — and Kossuth was, after all, one of the most celebrated and controversial figures of his age — Marx sought to add to his own lustre and reputation. Marx's comments and criticisms of Kossuth should thus be judged very much in this 'subjective' light.

Throughout his life in exile and, in particular, during his first ten years in exile, Kossuth endeavoured to rally support for Hungary's independence. He failed, but this failure should not colour our estimate of the man. At this time, the 'balance of power' and the rights of great nations and empires determined international outcomes, and small nations, however great their spokesmen, had no influence in determining the European order.

Historiography still tends to couple Marx with Engels. Although Engels was often critical of Kossuth's actions, his criticisms were milder and less sustained by animus than Marx's own. Indeed, from the very start, Engels viewed the struggles of the various European countries differently from Marx. As a war correspondent for the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung*, Engels keenly followed the war of independence in Hungary. He considered Kossuth to be a national hero: Kossuth was 'a Danton and Carnot in one person',² who fought not only against Austrian despotism but, as Engels saw it at the time, also for the liberty of all oppressed peoples. He blamed the Slavs for the failure of the revolution and, in respect to the Croats, faulted Kossuth for making 'all possible concessions to them ... This submissiveness to a nation that is counter-revolutionary by nature is the only thing with which the Magyars can be reproached'.³

2 Friedrich Engels, 'A magyar harc' (13 January 1849), in *Marx-Engels művei* (hereafter *MEM*), 47 vols, Budapest, 1962 etc, 6, pp. 157–67 (p. 157)

3 Engels, 'A demokratikus pánszlávizmus', *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* (15 February 1849), translated in *MEM*, 6, pp. 268–76 (p. 269).

With the fall of Hungary as the last bastion of freedom on continental Europe, disillusionment with revolution as the means of liberty overcame both Engels and Marx. Nevertheless, in the case of Marx, disillusionment also turned into a bitter contempt for revolutionaries in general and for Kossuth in particular. At first, Marx's contempt for Kossuth was made manifest mainly in his private correspondence with Engels and other friends. This did not, however, satisfy Marx's perverted lust for long. He jealously watched Kossuth's every move and resolved to discredit him at the bar of public opinion. To this end, he gathered over a ten-year period information on Kossuth and on Hungarian and other exiles with a view to a final 'showdown'. This culminated in Marx's pamphlet, *Herr Vogt* (1860).

Marx and Engels frequently accused Kossuth of applying 'double standards' in his dealings. According to Engels, however, the revolution does not recognize the 'legality of proceedings'.⁴ Accordingly, one can argue in Kossuth's favour that his own disregard for consistency and principle in the interests of national freedom comported with Engels's own view. We should additionally note that Marx and Engels interpreted Kossuth's actions, and based their accusation of 'double-dealing', either in a highly partisan manner or else on the basis of false information.

Thus, at the time of Kossuth's arrival in England, Engels exploded: 'Kossuth, who might have known from the Blue Books that Hungary had been betrayed by the noble viscount [Lord Palmerston], called him "the dear friend of his bosom" when landing at Southampton'.⁵ As it was, however, far from calling Palmerston his 'bosom friend', Kossuth had not even mentioned his name. He had thanked the people of Southampton for his reception and shaken hands with the city's mayor, referring to him as 'my best and trusted friend'.⁶ Engels's claim was also refuted by Richard Cobden, leader of the 'Peace Party', who in writing to his friend and close companion, John Bright, stated, 'Kossuth himself avoids saying anything in praise of Palmerston'.⁷

4 Engels, 'Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Germany' (*New York Daily Tribune*, 9 April 1852), in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Works* (hereafter *MEW*), 45 vols, London, New York and Moscow, 1978 etc, 11, pp. 3–91 (p. 62)

5 Marx, 'Lord Palmerston', *The People's Paper*, 22 October — 24 December, given in *MEW*, 12, pp. 341–7 (390–1). See also, Marx, 'Herr Vogt — Patrons and Accomplices' (hereafter, 'Patrons and Accomplices'), in *MEW*, 17, pp. 214–329.

6 *Authentic Life of His Excellency Louis Kossuth Governor of Hungary*, (reprinted from *The Illustrated London News*), London, 1851, p. 35. (Hereafter, *Authentic Life*).

7 John Morley, *The Life of Richard Cobden*, 2 vols, London, 1881, 2, p. 101 (Cobden to Bright, 29 October 1851).

It seems also to have been incomprehensible to Engels that, while praising republicanism and the French socialists in Marseille, Kossuth could yet pay his respects to Queen Victoria at Southampton. This apparent contradiction prompted Engels to comment, 'Kossuth is like the Apostle Paul, all things to all men'.⁸ It might, though, be argued that Kossuth's statement on this occasion, 'It is ... a glorious sight to behold a queen on the throne representing the principle of liberty', was not only an expression of gratitude but also an oblique attack on Franz Joseph, who could hardly be described as either a constitutional monarch or a representative of the principle of liberty.⁹

Marx and Engels were not the only voices of ill-will towards Kossuth. Among others was *The Times*. It is worth noting a striking similarity between Engels's outburst, as given above, and *The Times*. Certainly, at first sight, *The Times* seems rather complimentary: 'No foreigner ever made better speeches in this country; perhaps no man ever succeeded so entirely in addressing another country in its own language; but Kossuth has not only mastered our language, he has mastered the feelings of each class, and the peculiarities, the prejudices, and the history of each town; *he has been all things to all men with the zeal and even the power of an apostle*'.¹⁰ One can only speculate as to how Engels's own words and allusion, given previously in a private letter to Marx, could have found their way into *The Times*.

Cobden regarded this and other numerous attacks on Kossuth in *The Times* as a great affront. He wrote to Bright: 'Are we to let him be slaughtered here by *The Times*, and stand silently by whilst worse than Turks are assassinating him morally?'¹¹ With respect to the machinations of *The Times*, even Lord Palmerston expressed views to the ambassador in Vienna, instructing him 'not to allow the Austrians to imagine that public opinion in England is to be gathered from articles put to *The Times* by Austrian agents in London'.¹²

The beady eye of Marx, who had been in frequent contact with the English Chartists, did not fail to note Kossuth's reluctance to attend meetings of working men. Under pressure from his fellow exiles, Kossuth did

8 Engels to Marx, 27 October 1851, given in *MEM*, 27, p. 345; Marx, 'Patrons and Accomplices', p. 216.

9 *Authentic Life*, p. 35.

10 *The Times*, 22 November 1851.

11 Morley, *Life of Richard Cobden*, 2, p. 103 (Cobden to Bright, 6 November 1851).

12 Evelyn Ashley, *The Life of Henry Temple, Viscount Palmerston 1846–1865*, Second edition, 2 vols, London, 1876, 1, p. 139 (Palmerston to Ponsonby, 9 September 1849).

in fact go to a few such meetings but he, nevertheless, always delivered carefully prepared speeches. On two occasions, he departed from his usual position and disavowed socialism. As he put it, socialism 'is inconsistent with social order and the security of property ... Believing then, that — not from any merit, but from the state of my country — I may be able somewhat to influence the course of the next European revolution, I think right plainly to declare beforehand my allegiance to the great principle of security for personal property'.¹³

This statement was as fuel to the fire for the Chartist leaders, especially for the poet-cum-journalist, Ernest Jones. Marx, who evidently shied away from attacking Kossuth himself, seized the opportunity to incite Jones to assail Kossuth publicly, and Jones rose to the invitation. Jones's outbursts are worth citing since they also mirror Marx's own outlook. It is uncertain just how much information Marx passed on to Jones but it is suggested in the letter Marx wrote to Engels, 'E. Jones — using my letter — mercilessly attacked Kossuth'.¹⁴

Jones's claims were, however, so ridiculous and extravagant as not to be taken seriously. He wrote, 'M. Kossuth tells us, "he will influence the great European revolutions, giving them an anti-social direction". Of course he phrases his declaration of war against SOCIAL RIGHT, under the guise and cover of "security to property" ... I tell him they are not to be cut down to the intellectual and social standard of an obscure semi-barbarous people, like the Magyars, still standing in the half-civilization of the sixteenth century, who actually presume to dictate the great enlightenment of Italy, Germany and France, and to gain a false-won cheer from the gullibility of England'.¹⁵

One may speculate as to the motives behind this attack. It is possible that Marx and Jones considered it unacceptable that Kossuth should ever succeed in winning the workers to the side of 'the inevitable European revolution' and that he should become the leading spokesman of European liberty. Marx could not conceive other than that he and his closest followers had an exclusive right to preach authoritatively on revolution, freedom, democracy and 'a new world order'. In this respect, it is not surprising that Marx's antagonism extended beyond Kossuth to embrace a variety of other revolutionary democrats.

13 F. W. Newman, *Select Speeches of Kossuth*, London, 1853, pp. 5–6.

14 Marx to Engels, 1 December 1851, given in *MEM*, 27, p. 353.

15 Ernest Jones, 'Kossuth and Hungary, "What is Kossuth?"', *Notes to The People*, 2, 1851, no 26, pp. 501–889 (p. 606).

When Kossuth departed for the United States, Marx did not miss the opportunity to express his profound contempt for the revolutionary democrats, including the German Gottfried Kinkel, the French Alexandre Ledru-Rollin as well as Giuseppe Mazzini. As he quipped, 'these gentlemen had gone to sleep after deciding to suspend world history until Kossuth's return'.¹⁶ Commenting on Kossuth's departure for America, Marx wrote to Engels, 'You do know that Kossuth left on the 20th, but you don't know yet that he was accompanied by Lola Montez and the cavalier Göhringer'.¹⁷

Lola Montez, a dancer and former mistress of the Bavarian King Ludwig I, was indeed on board the same ship, but not as a member of Kossuth's entourage. After numerous attempts she succeeded in approaching Kossuth with the following words, 'Commander, in your next war with Austria give me a hussar regiment!' Instead of Kossuth, his trusted friend, Ferenc Pulszky, replied, 'Of course, Mademoiselle. I am sure nothing less would satisfy you'.¹⁸ For his part, Göhringer, a former German revolutionary and innkeeper in London, was an admirer of Kossuth. Leaders of the various revolutionary committees frequented his inn where they laid their plans for a rising led by Mazzini and Kossuth.¹⁹ Apparently Marx owed Göhringer money for meals that he had not paid for. Marx, ever the materialist, expressed his dismay that his debt, once discharged, might be used to finance the next revolution.²⁰

Nor did *The Times* miss the opportunity to comment sarcastically on Kossuth's departure: 'M. Kossuth is a person of no inconsiderable ability, as his addresses testify; but after serving the purposes of his political Barnums, he will be ultimately carried off to America along with Kate and Ellen Bateman, the woolly horse, and other public notorieties'.²¹

The intense political rivalry, which engulfed the whole of America during the campaign for the 1852 presidential election, put Kossuth in a difficult situation. Almost all parties sought to exploit his immense popularity, and the Young America movement adopted his tenet of 'intervention for non-intervention' in their agitation for the abolition of slavery. As Kossuth had originally meant it, 'intervention for non-intervention' was an appeal to America to stop Russia from interfering in Hungary's affairs in the event of an armed conflict breaking out again between Hungary and

16 Marx to Engels, 9 December 1851, given in *MEM*, 27, p. 359.

17 Marx to Engels, 24 November 1851, given in *ibid.*, p. 348.

18 Ferenc Pulszky, *Életem és korom*, 2 vols, Budapest, 1884, 2, p. 71.

19 D. Jánossy, *A Kossuth-emigráció Angliában és Amerikában 1851–1852*, 2 vols, Budapest, 1944, 2, part 2, p. 945.

20 Marx to Engels, 13 October 1851, given in *MEM*, 17, p. 335.

21 *The Times*, 29 October 1851.

Austria. Whereas the abolitionists in the North hoped that Kossuth would, as a representative of liberty, denounce slavery, the anti-abolitionists in the South expected him to argue for non-intervention in their affairs by the federal government.²² Kossuth, however, sided with neither party.

Marx, who watched Kossuth's progress in America like a hawk, misrepresented him in print while, typically, refusing to identify his sources: 'Kossuth's performance in the United States, where he spoke against slavery in the North and for slavery in the South, left behind nothing but a great sense of disappointment and 300 dead speeches'.²³ With regard to the issue of slavery, however, Kossuth made his position absolutely clear at a gathering in New Orleans: 'What have I to do with abolitionism or anti-abolitionism? Nothing in the world. That is not my matter; I am no citizen of the United States, I have neither the right nor the will to interfere with your domestic concerns; I claim for my nation the right to regulate its own institutions; I therefore must respect, and indeed I do respect, the same right in others'.²⁴

All the while, Marx was busy collecting incriminating evidence against Kossuth. Evidently, he had already come across some. To his friend Adolph Cluss, Marx briefly alluded to 'the putsch plans of Mazzini, Kossuth etc',²⁵ and to Engels he wrote, 'I expect they intend to commence it in Sicily'.²⁶ In both cases, Marx was referring to the insurrection planned for Milan which eventually broke out in February 1853. Marx had, however, no knowledge of plans for a parallel rising in Hungary, scheduled for the end of 1852. This second plan was known to the Austrian secret service, which duly frustrated the attempt. The Austrians had, however, no knowledge of one of Kossuth's secret agents in Italy, a certain General Vetter.²⁷ Marx, nevertheless, named Vetter in one of his articles, thus betraying his secret mission.²⁸

Following this revelation, Marx more or less ignored Kossuth until 1858. In that year he launched a vicious campaign aimed at proving Kossuth's collusion with Russia, which has gone down in history as the

22 Pulszky, *Életem és korom*, 2, pp. 77–8; D. S. Spencer, *Louis Kossuth and Young America 1848–1852*, London, 1977, p. 103 (hereafter, Spencer, *Louis Kossuth*).

23 Marx, 'Patrons and Accomplices', given in *MEW*, 17, p. 217.

24 Spencer, *Louis Kossuth*, p. 149.

25 Marx to Cluss, 10 May 1852, given in *MEM*, 28, p. 492.

26 Marx to Engels, 6 May 1852, given in *ibid.*, 28, p. 62.

27 Jánossy, *Kossuth emigráció*, p. 917.

28 Marx, 'Movements of Mazzini and Kossuth — League with Louis Napoleon — Palmerston', *New York Tribune*, 28 September 1852, given in *MEW*, 11, pp. 354–7 (p. 354).

‘Circassian affair’.²⁹ In this incident, Kossuth’s agent in Turkey, János Bangya or Mehemet Bey, was accused by Marx of having betrayed the cause of the Circassians to the Russians. Bangya was, as it turned out, also a high-ranking officer in the British army and had been only following British instructions.³⁰ Marx’s attempt to discredit Kossuth was thus in turn discredited.

Then something came to Marx’s rescue: the 1859 war in Lombardy. On this occasion, Kossuth and the majority of Hungarian émigrés really did ‘ally themselves with the devil’, albeit in the unlikely shape of Louis Napoleon. The alliance prompted Marx to launch the most vicious attack on Kossuth and the Hungarian exiles. His contempt was most keenly expressed in the following: ‘Voltaire, we know, kept four monkeys in Ferney [... and] needed these monkeys to draw off his bile, satisfy his hatred and calm his fear of the weapons of polemics, just as much as Louis Napoleon needs the monkeys of the revolution in Italy. And Kossuth, Klapka, Vogt and Garibaldi too are fed, given golden collars, kept under lock and key, cajoled or kicked, depending on whether hatred of the revolution or fear of it predominates in the mood of their master’.³¹

Kossuth’s role in the war for Lombardy is well documented and has been extensively analysed. It turned out to be his own and the émigrés’ last effort aimed at achieving the liberation of Hungary with foreign help. And Marx’s long battle with Kossuth also came virtually to an end with Villafranca. In his pamphlet, *Herr Vogt*, published in 1860, Marx merely reiterated his worn-out objections to the revolutionary activities of Kossuth and the exiles.

Marx, of course, never understood Kossuth nor the extent of support which the Hungarian leader could always enlist, even in exile. Kossuth rested his appeal, and derived his support, from a concept of the nation which was inimical to Marx’s own understanding of the dynamics of revolution and of ‘progress’. Kossuth’s message had the capacity of mobilizing the masses, which was something for which Marx could never forgive him. As a consequence, Marx could counter Kossuth only by relying upon the techniques of misrepresentation and of ‘tabloid-journalism’. The bankruptcy of Marx’s outlook never stood more starkly revealed than in his criticisms of, and campaign against, Lajos Kossuth.

29 Marx, ‘A Traitor in Circassia’, *The Free Press*, no 34, April Fool’s Day, 1857, given in *MEW*, 15, pp. 236–7; *New York Daily Tribune*, 23 September 1858, given in *MEW*, 16, pp. 21–7 (p. 21).

30 London, Public Records Office, FO 78, R1328, 19 June 1856 (Turkey. Records of Correspondence, Mehemet Bey).

31 Marx, ‘Spree and Mincio’, *Das Volk*, 25 June 1859, given *MEW*, 16, pp. 380–1.

Kossuth in Exile

George Gömöri

When Lajos Kossuth arrived in Southampton in 1851, two letters awaited him. One was from Lord Palmerston and included a private invitation to the Foreign Secretary's estate; the second was from Mazzini, telling him not to accept Palmerston's invitation. Kossuth put both letters in his pocket and proceeded to make a speech to the citizens of Southampton. This episode tells us much about Kossuth. He was his own master and he adapted himself to the demands of the situation rather than to what was expected of him by other politicians. His answer to Palmerston was, incidentally, the correct one: he would meet the English statesman only if invited officially as Governor of Hungary. As this was not the case in 1851, the meeting between the two men took place only later, after Kossuth's return from America.

There is much truth in Engels's observation that Kossuth was 'like the Apostle Paul, all things to all men'. Kossuth was a consummate politician who could address royalists and republicans in an equally convincing manner. One thing is certain: he was and remained a liberal all his life. Radicals belonging to other nationalities were often disappointed by his conduct, especially after 1859 when he showed himself ready to meet Napoleon III in order to give Hungarian support to the French in the war against Austria. (There were at this time 4,000 Hungarians in Italy, most of them prisoners of war, ready to join the Hungarian Legion and march back to Hungary. They all hailed and followed Kossuth, but following Villafranca the unit was disbanded). After 1859, neither Mazzini nor Ledru-Rollin would have anything to do with Kossuth; on the other hand, however, he continued to be admired by Cavour and Garibaldi.

As for the Hungarian emigration, the attacks on Kossuth in British and American newspapers by Kázmér Batthyány and Bertalan Szemere in 1851–52 created much division and rancour. One of the best-informed émigrés, László Teleki (who was critical of Kossuth in several respects) realized that whoever attacked Kossuth publicly also harmed the cause of independent Hungary. It was not, however, Teleki but another émigré,

János Czetz who in a letter from Paris went so far as to claim that 'Kázmér and Berci [i.e. Szemere] are trying by every means to make a Polish club of the Hungarian emigration'. Czetz alluded here to the squabbles between Polish conservatives and democrats who often refused to sit down at the same table when representing Poland on international committees. As for Klapka, he might have had an axe to grind against Kossuth, yet he was also ready to cooperate with Kossuth in 1859 when Hungarian interests required cooperation of this sort.¹ The same was true of László Teleki who often wrote that Kossuth loathed listening to criticism and only got along with flatterers. In most of his letters to Klapka, Teleki refers to Kossuth by the nickname of *Rengeteg*, which could mean either 'enormous' or 'a vast forest'. He wrote on one occasion, 'Rengeteg rengetegebb, mint valaha' (literally, 'The enormous one is more enormous than ever'). In other words, Teleki recognized that, personal sympathies and aversions notwithstanding, Kossuth was a politician on a 'large scale' and that, for better or worse, he was the most important representative of Hungary abroad. This changed after 1861, and even more so after the Compromise of 1867, but until then whoever attacked Lajos Kossuth in public did, arguably, a disservice to Hungary.

Finally, a point about Kossuth and Jelačić. While Jelačić was and remained a provincial Croatian hero, Kossuth grew in emigration from a national figure into an international hero, acclaimed on both sides of the Atlantic. From a spokesman of the Hungarian cause, he was transformed into one of the great liberal heroes of the age. Neither he nor Jelačić saw their hopes realized in their own lifetime, but Kossuth left behind a more lasting legacy.

1 When Kossuth was in Vidin, he rather foolishly assigned the post of commander of Komárom to an adventurer called Henningsen, but Klapka acted more quickly by agreeing with the Austrians to negotiate the terms of the castle's surrender.

Marketing Hungary: Kossuth and the Politics of Propaganda

Tibor Frank

During his years in exile after 1849, Lajos Kossuth made, almost single-handed, a formidable contribution to the cause of Hungary: he put the idea of his native country as a prospective political entity on the map of Europe. Pioneering methods of modern public relations and political marketing, he built up Hungary as a political construct, a product to be 'sold' by his unflagging, unstoppable propaganda, a public relations effort to win the goodwill of the English-speaking peoples whose political support seemed to him essential in pursuing the struggle for Hungarian freedom and independence.

Kossuth used his reading of English, particularly Shakespeare, to construct a myth in the course of the nineteenth century and this became something of a literary *topos* itself, virtually Shakespearean in nature. It presented Kossuth as a hero who chose freedom in his solitary confinement by reading, studying, and translating the works of Shakespeare, the bard of the freedom-loving English (and American) people. Thus, through a process of 'sliding transitions', Shakespeare became a metaphor, identified with freedom itself, and found his place both in Kossuth lore and in the realm of international political symbolism.¹

I

Hungarian interest in England and the English language increased greatly in the late eighteenth century. In his diary for 1787, Count Ferenc

1 Recent publications have already suggested that Kossuth's much-quoted account of the origins of his English is a myth, see Ágnes Deák, 'Két ismeretlen Kossuth dokumentum', *Holmi*, 1994, p. 834; Gábor Pajkossy, "... cserébe nyertem egész későbbi életemet: 'Kossuth és fogásága'", in István Orosz and Ferenc Pölöskei, eds, *Nemzeti és társadalmi átalakulás a XIX. században Magyarországon. Tanulmányok Szabad György 70. születésnapjára*, Budapest, 1994, pp. 164–65.

Széchényi noted that the influence of British culture had become especially noticeable on the continent after the Treaty of Paris in 1763. The impact was powerful and widespread, he added: 'Man fing an sich nach England zu kleiden, lernte seine Muttersprache, und ass seine Nationalspeise'.² During the Napoleonic Wars, the influence of English life, attitudes, ideas and customs became even more marked, particularly in countries allied to Britain against France, such as the Habsburg Empire of which Hungary was part. Vienna became a focal point of interest in Britain, and it was often there that travelling Hungarian noblemen such as Gergely Berzeviczy learned to appreciate the qualities of the English constitution, government, industry and commerce. 'England ist sicher das interessanteste Land der Welt, sowohl was die Nation, die Verfassung und Regierung, die Industrie und den Handel betrifft'.³

At the end of the 18th century, members of the Hungarian nobility began to study English, using grammars and dictionaries available in German or Latin.⁴ Count György Festetics considered a knowledge of English so important that he included it in his study plan for his son (1799).⁵ Count László Teleki [III] gave similar advice to the tutor of his three sons, arguing that knowledge of English was greatly needed, not necessarily to speak it, but to understand the growing number of important books in that language.⁶ One of his sons, Count József, was to become the first president of the Hungarian Academy. These instructions were also consulted by Baroness Ilona Cserei-Wesselényi for the education of her son Miklós, an aristocratic mentor of and model for Kossuth.⁷ The study of English went so far, in aristocratic circles at least, that Count Aurél Dessewffy considered it simply a matter of fashion which, however, 'did not go beyond some conversation in English with the horse'

2 Ferenc Szirbik, *Az angol nyelv terjeszkedése Magyarországon 1914-ig*, Debreceni angol dolgozatok, IV, Kecskemét, 1941, p. 11.

3 Aladár Berzeviczy, *Aus den Lehr- und Wanderjahren eines ungarischen Edelmannes im vorigen Jahrhunderte*, Leipzig, 1897, pp. 60–61. Quoted by Szirbik, *op. cit.*, p. 11; cf. Éva H. Balázs, *Berzeviczy Gergely, a reformpolitikus* (1763–1795), Budapest, 1967, pp. 124–6.

4 Ernő Solymos, 'Angol nyelvtanulás Magyarországon', *Studies in English Philology*, Vol. II, Budapest, 1937, pp. 126–7.

5 Vince Lakatos, 'Festetics György gróf planuma fia neveléséről' *Magyar Középiskola*, 1910, pp. 227–30, esp. p. 228.

6 Count László Teleki, *A nevelésről*, c.1780, Library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Budapest, MSS Collection: RUI 4r, 133/III, p. 47 [p. 24]. Cf. Sándor Imre, "Gróf Teleki László Tanácsadása a nevelésről — Adalék a M. T. Akadémia első elnökének életéhez", *Protestáns Szemle*, 34, 1925, pp. 603–8.

7 Sándor Imre, *op. cit.*, p. 606.

trainer and the stable-boy, and at best the reading of perhaps one or two fashionable novels'.⁸

It is to this generation of anglophile Hungarian aristocrats and noblemen that the remarkable reformers of the 1820s and 1830s looked as ideals and models to follow.⁹ English literature in translation flourished, with some of the very best literary talents striving to make English literature available to Hungarians.¹⁰

Encouraged by eminent authors and such influential journals as *Erdélyi Múzeum* and *Felsőmagyarországi Minerva*, the study of English became the fashionable intellectual adventure of the new generation. For some English visitors it amounted almost to Anglomania. A number of language instructors appeared on the scene.¹¹ The poet Mihály Vörösmarty began to read Shakespeare in 1820, and collected his works. In 1822 he declared he had chosen 'Shakespeare's world as his home, so that [...] we can shut out the clamour of the world outside'.¹²

Members of the intellectual élite in Hungary commonly read Shakespeare as early as the end of the eighteenth century. The Hungarian authors who served as guards at this time in the court of Maria Theresa, such as György Bessenyei, studied Shakespeare alongside the works of Young and Milton. József Kármán wondered 'whether Pannonia could be turned into England? Is there among us a Newton, a Locke, a Shakespeare, a Milton [...] Begone, you daring dream that deceives me with your delusive images'.¹³ Though

8 Count Aurél Dessewffy, *Összes művei*, ed. József Ferenczy, Budapest, 1887, p. 328. Quoted by Gyula Kornis, *A magyar művelődés eszményei 1777–1848*, Budapest, 1927, Vol. II, p. 446.

9 H. Balázs, *op. cit.*, pp. 124–25.

10 Sándor Fest, *Angol irodalmi hatások hazánkban Széchenyi István fellépéseiig*, Budapest, 1917, pp. 51–52.

11 Solymos, *op. cit.*, p. 128. cf. Sándor Fest, 'Adalékok az angol nyelv térfoglalásához hazánkban 1848 előtt', *Egyetemes Philologiai Közlöny*, 45, 1921, pp. 128–29; Kornis, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 443–47, 334–35. For English teachers in pre-1848 Hungary such as J. S. Zerffi and Imre Szabad, see Tibor Frank, *From Habsburg Agent to Victorian Scholar: G.G. Zerffi 1820–1892*, New York, 2000, pp. 17–19; Tibor Frank, *Ethnicity, Propaganda, Myth-Making*, Budapest, 1999, pp. 373–74.

12 Mihály Vörösmarty, 'Teslér barátomhoz':

Shakespeare' világát választjuk lakál,
Hogy, míg zajával eltelik szívünk,
Ne halljuk itt a 'külvilág' zaját,
Melly édes álmaintak elveri.

In: *Vörösmarty Mihály kisebb költeményei*, Vörösmarty Mihály, *Összes Művei*, Vol. I, Budapest, 1960, p. 214.

13 József Kármán, *A nemzet csinosodása*, quoted by Sándor Maller and Kálmán Ruttkay (eds.) *Magyar Shakespeare-tükör*, Budapest, 1984, p. 65.

most English literature came to be known in Hungary through translations, particularly German and French, editions of the original works also turned up in the libraries of Hungarian aristocrats and well-informed members of the gentry.¹⁴

The most obvious case is Count István Széchenyi, an aristocratic reformer and the great rival of Kossuth, who took a very special interest in England, read *Macbeth* and *King Lear* in Hungarian translation, and mentioned the poet in several of his works such as *Világ* [Light] and his *Külföldi úti rajzai* [Foreign Travels]. Széchenyi frequented the theatre and was particularly interested in productions of Shakespeare's plays, such as *Julius Caesar* in 1842 and *Romeo and Juliet* in 1847.¹⁵ His diary contains references to *Hamlet*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Macbeth*, and other plays by Shakespeare.¹⁶ His library included a book on *The Beauties of Shakespeare*.¹⁷ None the less, the authors he most frequently read were his own great contemporaries, notably Goethe, Schiller, Byron and Scott.¹⁸

The typical Hungarian aristocratic library included some English literature in addition to Shakespeare, though the bulk of these collections consisted of books in German, French and Latin.¹⁹ Nevertheless, the library of the Károlyi family, nurtured particularly by Count György Károlyi (1802–1877), included the complete works of Shakespeare in various editions from the early nineteenth century (1826, 1829, 1838, 1844), as well as some Hungarian translations (Mihály Vörösmarty, 1856).²⁰ The remains of the English collection of another branch of the Károlyi family, headed by Count Sándor Károlyi (an uncle and mentor of Hungary's post-World War I President Count Mihály Károlyi), include *The Plays and Poems of William Shakespeare* in seven volumes (Leipzig, 1843–44).²¹ Some of the Károlyi collection, confiscated after Mihály

14 For a general survey of Hungarian reading habits before 1848, see Géza Fülöp, *A magyar olvasóközönség a felvilágosodás idején és a reformkorban*, Budapest, 1978, pp. 77–137.

15 István Széchenyi, *Napló*, Budapest, 1978, pp. 972, 1153.

16 Széchenyi, *op. cit.*, pp. 59–60, 72, 1315.

17 László Bártfai Szabó, *Gróf Széchenyi István könyvtára*, Budapest, 1923, p. 83.

18 *Gróf Széchenyi István külföldi úti rajzai és féljegyzései*, ed. Antal Zichy, Budapest, 1890, pp. 282, 285, 286, 291.

19 Szirbik, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

20 'A nemzeti művelődési alapítvány tulajdonát képező Gróf Károlyi-könyvtár aukciója', *Árverési Közlöny*, 18, Budapest, 1937, p. 68.

21 Currently in the Library of the School of English and American Studies, Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest. Cf. Tibor Frank, 'Bibliothèque du Comte Etienne Károlyi' in Gábor Ittzs and András Kiséry eds., *Míves semmiségek*, Piliscsaba, 2002, pp. 349–56.

Károlyi's trial in the 1920s, was auctioned off in 1932; these included the complete works of Shakespeare in English (1820), as well as several works in French translation (Alfred de Vigny, 1830).²²

The Zichy family library, founded by Bishop Count Domokos Zichy, who also bought a number of smaller collections from outstanding literary collectors, included the works of Shakespeare in German translation (1826).²³ One of the most remarkable members of the nineteenth century Hungarian aristocracy, Baron József Eötvös, read Shakespeare from the 1830s, and called him 'the greatest poet in the world'.²⁴ Most probably, however, like so many of his contemporaries, Eötvös read Shakespeare in German: A copy of *Othello* in German survived in his library for some time.²⁵

The interest in foreign literature was so remarkable that Hungarian aristocrats were often chided for their cosmopolitan, non-national intellectual outlook. More often than not, a critic noted in 1848, aristocratic libraries in Hungary boasted 'almost exclusively French and English novels and historical works, and if a book by [Baron Miklós] Jósika, [Baron József] Eötvös and [Count István] Széchenyi happens to wander in between them this is simply because those authors belong to their own class'.²⁶

While Hungarian aristocrats may have boasted only a fine copy of Shakespeare in their libraries, authors such as Mihály Vörösmarty, József Bajza, Ferenc Toldy and Gábor Döbrentei were directly influenced by Shakespeare. The history of the impact of Shakespeare on Hungarian literature in the nineteenth century filled two large volumes as early as

22 'A M. Kir. Postatakarékpénztár árverési csarnokának 1932. novemberi külön aukciója', *Árverési Közlöny*, 13, Budapest, 1932, pp. 63, 68. Book collector Gyula Grexa identified this collection as formerly the property of Count Mihály Károlyi. I am indebted to antiquarian bookseller Mr. Ernő Lörincz for this piece of information, 1982.

23 'A bodakajtor-felsőszentiváni Gróf Zichy kastély könyvtára', in 'A M. Kir. Postatakarékpénztár árverési csarnokának 1938. évi külön aukciója', *Árverési Közlöny*, 19, Budapest, 1938, p. 219.

24 József Eötvös, *Gondolatok*, Budapest, 1903, quoted by Miklós Bényei, *Eötvös József olvasmányai*, Budapest, 1972, p. 29.

25 Miklós Bényei, 'Eötvös József könyvtára', Doctoral Dissertation, Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest, 1967, p. 94. Cf. Gábor Gángó, ed., *Eötvös József könyvtára*, Budapest, 1995, pp. 282–83.

26 Ottó Csatári [pseudonym of László Teleki Kovách], "Irodalmunk 1847. évi termékei", *Pesti Divatlap*, 1848, pp. 539–40; published in Máté Kovács, ed. *Könyv és könyvtár a magyar társadalom életében az államalapítástól 1849-ig*, Budapest, 1963, p. 525.

1909.²⁷ The great national poet Ferenc Kölcsey had his own copy of Shakespeare and remarked that ‘it is only from the bosom of genius that life pours forth with warmth: ordinary folk are cold and stunted forever’.²⁸ The *fin-de-siècle* Hungarian critic and literary historian Frigyes Riedl went as far as to suggest that Shakespeare served as the great mentor of Hungarian poets in the early nineteenth century.²⁹ Indeed, Shakespeare had a tremendous impact on Vörösmarty’s poetry and drama, as well as on Bajza’s aesthetics.³⁰

Both traditions, the aristocratic as well as the literary, were to have a far-reaching impact on the class and the generation that nurtured Hungary’s greatest nineteenth century statesman, Lajos Kossuth.

II

The Hungarian aristocracy, cosmopolitan through family connections and travel, left a formidable imprint on the cultural behaviour, taste and sensibility of the educated members of the lesser gentry. Losing their ancient estates, this social class formed a layer intermediate between the landed nobility and the peasantry, creating what came closest to a middle class in an essentially feudal social structure.³¹ The aristocracy’s way of life and thinking conditioned their lifestyle and mindset. Their ablest members came to form Hungary’s missing professional élite, the outlook of which was largely shaped by an increasingly significant Hungarian literary tradition.³² Lajos Kossuth was to play a special role at the interstices of several of these traditions.

Kossuth was a typical representative of the lesser nobility, which became a powerful political force in Hungary’s ‘Vormärz’ age of reform (1825–1848). Though no longer possessing their lands, the Kossuth

27 József Bayer, *Shakespeare drámái hazánkban*, Vols. 1–2, Budapest, 1909; cf. Péter Dávidházi, ‘Isten másodszülöttje’. *A magyar Shakespeare-kultusz természetrájza*, Budapest, 1989, pp. 200–201, and also 77–195, 323.

28 Kölcsey to Pál Szemere, August 2, 1834, given in Maller and Ruttay, *op. cit.* p. 86.

29 Frigyes Riedl, *Shakespeare és a magyar irodalom*, Budapest, 1917, pp. 8, 14, 36; cf. László Jakabfi, *Az angol irodalom és a Vörösmarty-Bajza-Toldy triász*, Budapest, 1941, pp. 52–3.

30 See Jakabfi, *op. cit.*, pp. 18–35, 37–9, 40–41, 52–7, 74.

31 Domokos Kosáry, *Kossuth Lajos a reformkorban*, Budapest, 1946, pp. 30–41; Istvan Deak, *The Lawful Revolution: Louis Kossuth and the Hungarians, 1848–1849*, New York, 1979, pp. 3–9.

32 Fülöp, *op. cit.*, pp. 183–95.

family maintained a certain intellectual standard and put special effort into the education of young Lajos.³³ For role models the Kossuths had several exemplars. The social class to which they belonged included a number of eminent intellectuals such as Kossuth's future personal physician, Pál Almási Balogh, who had a library of almost 50,000 volumes.³⁴ Iván Nagy (1824–1898), an outstanding historian, considered it important to collect not only Shakespeare, but also Milton, Byron, Dickens and Thackeray.³⁵ A major representative of the same class, Hungary's exiled 1849 Prime Minister Bertalan Szemere, possessed the complete works of Shakespeare in his sizeable library in Paris.³⁶

The son of a lawyer and a lawyer himself, Kossuth was exceptionally well-read in German, French, and English as a young man. German was probably his first foreign language and he preferred to read books by French and English authors also in German.³⁷

The lawyer became one of the leaders of 'Young Hungary', finding his way into the Hungarian parliament where he became the editor of a unique, handwritten parliamentary gazette, *Országgyűlési Tudósítások*. Between 1832 and 1836, he published some 346 issues of what could be called a Hungarian *Hansard*. In an era without a political press, Kossuth's venture became the sole advocate of Hungary's budding national movement, the rallying point for the forces of political opposition to the system of Metternich and the Habsburgs. After 1836, he continued his paper as *Törvényhatósági Tudósítások*, of which 23 numbers had appeared by the time the government finally decided to close it down.³⁸ Kossuth was

33 Kosáry, *Kossuth Lajos a reformkorban*, pp. 18–9, 42–8, 58–60; István Barta, *A fiatal Kossuth*, Budapest, 1966, pp. 11–22; György Szabad, *Kossuth politikai pályája*, Budapest, 1977, pp. 10–13.

34 Fülöp, *op. cit.*, p. 183.

35 Anna Kovács, 'Nagy Iván könyvtára mint egy nemzedék műveltségének tüköre', *A Nógrád Megyei Múzeumok Évkönyve*, VI, 1980, p. 130; Géza Fülöp, *op. cit.*, pp. 206–207; Géza Fülöp, 'A vidéki kisbirtokos nemesség könyvkultúrája a 18–19. század fordulóján (A Skublics család zalaszentbalázsi könyvtára)', *Magyar Könyvszemle*, 90, 1974, p. 255.

36 Leltára az 1865ik évi márcz 21én Parisban elhunyt néh. Szemere Bertalanné Jurkovits Leopoldine Asszonyság hagyatékához tartozó összes javaknak, Szemere hagyaték, Fővárosi Levéltár, Budapest. Visszaállított (Pesti) Városi Törvényszék iratai, Hagyatéki iratok (Szemere B.), 470/I-II/1866, IV. 1343/1–2, 65/a-66.

37 Kosáry, *Kossuth Lajos a reformkorban*, p. 58; *Kossuth Lajos iratai 1837. Május – 1840. december, Kossuth Lajos összes munkái*, Vol. 7, ed. Gábor Pajkossy, Budapest, 1989, p. 16.

38 Kosáry, *Kossuth Lajos a reformkorban*, pp. 96, 131; Barta, pp. 183–99; Szabad, pp. 26–37.

captured in the Buda hills, charged with high treason and jailed for over three years. In 1839 he was sentenced to four years altogether and freed only in 1840 under the terms of an amnesty.³⁹

It was in the prison located in the 'József' military barracks on the Castle Hill of Buda that Kossuth continued his studies in a variety of disciplines and languages. He was hungry for books: his correspondence with family and friends clearly demonstrates his voracious, almost insatiable appetite for reading.⁴⁰ The English language and the works of Shakespeare were to some extent already known to the prisoner. Kossuth's later claim that he actually learned English in prison by trying to read Shakespeare's *The Tempest* and *Macbeth* seems to be an exaggeration, even though in Britain and the United States after 1851 this was his standard response to questions about the origins of his ability to speak English.⁴¹ In a letter to his mother dated May 10, 1837, early in his first prison year, Kossuth asked for 'my copy of Shakespeare, Walker's English Dictionary, together with the other little ragged dictionary, and the grammars of Fin and Arnold, as well as Searl's little book on correct English pronunciation ...'⁴² He recalled these books even fifteen years later when addressing an American audience in 1852.⁴³ His references suggest a measure of familiarity with those books; his friend László Palóczy called him 'Times Redactor' already in a letter dated 1835,

39 For a recent, systematic treatment of Kossuth's term in prison, see Pajkossy, *op.cit.* (see above, note 1) pp. 157–74.

40 See esp. Kossuth to his mother, Buda, December 24, 1837, *Országos Levéltár* [hereafter OL] R 90, I. 50, p. 23, *Kossuth Lajos iratai*, p. 317; cf. pp. 75, 98–99, 102, 144–145, 147, 185, 210, 322, 413–14, 489, 509, 563; Kosáry, 'Kossuth fogásága', Part I, *Magyarságtudomány*, 2, 1943, pp. 242–44; Kosáry, *Kossuth Lajos a reformkorban*, pp. 173–75, 382; Szabad, *op. cit.*, pp. 40–41; Aurél Pompéry, *Kossuth Lajos 1837/39-iki hűtlenségi perének története*, Budapest, 1913, pp. 149–50.

41 P. C. Headley, *The Life of Louis Kossuth, Governor of Hungary*, Auburn, 1852, pp. 48–49. Cf. Szabad, pp. 13, 41, *op. cit.*; 'Eloquence of Kossuth', *The Eclectic Magazine* (originally from *The Athenaeum*), February 1852 (New York, 1851), p. 217. Cf. Pajkossy, *op. cit.*, pp. 158–60.

42 Kossuth to his mother, Buda, May 10, 1837, in *Kossuth Lajos iratai*, p. 75; see Kosáry, 'Kossuth fogásága', Part I, p. 223.

I identified 'Walker' as *A Critical Pronouncing Dictionary* and 'Arnold' as *Grammatica Anglicana oder Englische Grammatik* Leipzig, 1782; Vienna, 1793 for *Kossuth Lajos iratai*, p. 75, note 4. This grammar was popular in Hungary (also found in the library of the author Sándor Kisfaludy); cf. Solymos, 'Angol nyelvtanulás Magyarországon', p. 126. Kossuth did indeed receive the books, with the exception of Searl: cf. *Kossuth Lajos iratai*, p. 98, note 1.

43 Headley, *op.cit.*, p. 49.

clearly an indication of his special relationship with the British paper and the English language.⁴⁴ In a letter to his mother late in 1837 he also referred to his evaporating knowledge of French, explaining that 'I have been reading more in English for the last three years'.⁴⁵ His comment led the historian Dénes Jánossy to believe that Kossuth 'began his English studies during the diet [of 1832–1836]'.⁴⁶ In a speech in Birmingham in 1852, Kossuth also made it clear that '... it is not only from today, but from my early youth, [that] I have been spiritually connected with Britannia'.⁴⁷ Though this was doubtless intended to please his audience, it was essentially true and expressed his genuine sentiments.

The long list of English and American authors that Kossuth actually read during his prison years suggests that it would be misleading to identify Shakespeare as the sole source of his formidable knowledge of English. During his long years in prison, Kossuth was an avid reader of a number of books that surely helped shape his great oratorical powers. He knew of, and most probably read, a number of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century English works, among them Milton, *Hudibras* by Samuel Butler, Pope's *The Dunciad*, Addison's tragedy *Cato*, *The Vicar of Wakefield* by Goldsmith, novels by Marryat and Bulwer-Lytton, the histories of Gibbon, Hume, and John Lingard, as well as the poems of Byron. Of American authors he knew *The Alhambra* and *A Tour on the Prairies* by Washington Irving and *The Prairie*, *The Spy*, and *Lionel Lincoln* by James Fenimore Cooper.⁴⁸ Like so many of his contemporaries, Kossuth loved the Romantics of all nations, such as Georges Sand and Béranger, and also enjoyed Goethe and Schiller.⁴⁹

Though Kossuth, as already stated, read some of his English and American authors in German translation,⁵⁰ we have reason to believe that his intimate knowledge of a variety of classical English authors, as well as

44 Szabad, *op. cit.*, p. 41; cf. Kosáry, *Kossuth Lajos a reformkorban*, p. 50.

45 Kossuth to his mother, December 24, 1837, OL, R 90, I. 50, p. 23, in *Kossuth Lajos iratai*, p. 317.

46 Kossuth to his mother, December 24, 1837, OL, R 90, I. 50, p. 23, in *Kossuth Lajos iratai*, p. 317; Dénes A. Jánossy, 'Great Britain and Kossuth', *Archivum Europae Centro-Orientalis*, Vol. III, fasc. 1–3, Budapest, 1937, p. 4. Cf. Dávidházi, p. 107.

47 Headley, *op. cit.*, p. 376.

48 *Kossuth Lajos iratai*, pp. 144–45, 147, 317, 609; Gr. Széchenyi István írói és hírlapi vitája Kossuth Lajossal, Vol. I., ed. Gyula Viszota, Budapest, 1927, Vol. VI, (1841–43), pp. 685–89.

49 *Kossuth Lajos iratai*, pp. 144, 147, 317, 321; Gr. Széchenyi István írói és hírlapi vitája Kossuth Lajossal, pp. 685–89.

50 Kossuth to his mother, December 24, 1837, OL R 90, I. 50, p. 23, in *Kossuth Lajos iratai*, p. 317.

his remarkable familiarity with the language of both English and American Romantics, strongly contributed to the vocabulary, the grammar and style of his English in the 1850s and early 1860s.

Yet, during his exile of over four decades, Kossuth himself remembered and identified Shakespeare as the single source of his English, as his only 'teacher', and attributed his success solely to the bard. Late in his career Kossuth claimed that it was his careful reading and translating of the first few lines of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* that gave him his introduction to the English language.⁵¹ Elsewhere he seems to have suggested *The Tempest* as his chief source, though he may have been simply misquoted.⁵² As always, he was a meticulous student: 'I have a certain rule never to go on in reading anything without perfectly understanding what I read; so I went on, and by and by became somewhat familiar with your language', was how Kossuth in 1852 remembered his reading of *The Tempest* on which he 'worked for a fortnight to get through the first page'.⁵³ Much later, in 1878, he recalled the first 16 lines of *Macbeth* which he spent several months with in order to study the language.⁵⁴

As far as *Macbeth* is concerned, Kossuth's intimate knowledge of the tragedy is fully documented by his outstanding translation of the first five scenes, not published until 1934.⁵⁵ The author of one of the very first 'modern' translations of Shakespeare in nineteenth-century Hungary, Kossuth proved to be a pioneer for a generation of Shakespeare translators. Though Ferenc Kazinczy translated *Hamlet* (via German) in 1790 and Gábor Döbrentei preceded Kossuth with his own translation of *Macbeth* in 1830,⁵⁶ most of the classic translations came well after Kossuth: *Julius Caesar* (1839) and *King Lear* (begun in 1847) by Mihály Vörösmarty; *Coriolanus* (1848) by Sándor Petőfi; *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (begun in 1858) by János Arany.⁵⁷ Kossuth actually abandoned his

51 Pál Király, 'Látogatás Kossuthnál', *Vasárnapi Újság*, 1878, No. 37, pp. 589–90.
Cf. *Kossuth Lajos iratai*, p. 606, note 3.

52 Headley, p. 49.

53 *Ibid.*

54 Király, pp. 589–90.

55 Géza H. Kiss, 'Kossuth Lajos Macbeth fordítása', *Budapesti Szemle*, 234, 1934, pp. 75–90. The translation was recently published in full by Gábor Pajkossy in *Kossuth Lajos iratai*, pp. 593–606. cf. Kosáry, 'Kossuth fogásága', Part I, p. 242.

56 Maller and Ruttkay, eds., pp. 58–63, 77–84; Miklós Szenczi, Tibor Szobotka, Anna Katona, *Az angol irodalom története*, Budapest, 1972, p. 139; *Kossuth Lajos iratai*, p. 593.

57 Bayer; Kálmán Ruttkay, 'Klasszikus Shakespeare-fordításaink', in: László Kéry, László Országh, Miklós Szenczi, eds., *Shakespeare-tanulmányok*, Budapest, 1965, pp. 26–55; Dávidházi, pp. 104–10.

version of *Macbeth* upon learning of Gábor Döbrentei's 1830 translation.⁵⁸

Incomplete as it was, Kossuth's *Macbeth* was a forerunner of these classics that came to define Shakespeare for Hungarians for almost a century.⁵⁹ Though obviously dated and laden with antiquated elements of vocabulary and style, Kossuth's *Macbeth* is powerful and impassioned. It is no exaggeration to suggest that his extensive and rich Hungarian vocabulary helped him match the flavour of the original. Spirited at times, awkward at others, Kossuth's text is still understandable, even enjoyable today. Kossuth was not a poet, and he never seriously considered himself one.⁶⁰ Yet his *Macbeth* had a number of genuinely poetic lines, particularly where the Witches chant spells. He was able to create characters that fully served Shakespeare's intentions and helped express the intensely dramatic qualities of the tragedy. Kossuth seems to have understood Shakespeare's imagery and often cleaved closely to the original, with a rare ability to translate abstract ideas into images.⁶¹

In his private correspondence, as well as in his Hungarian journalism, Kossuth made a series of references to *Macbeth* and often quoted from Shakespeare in his own translation.⁶² Other plays by Shakespeare mentioned in Kossuth's letters from the prison years include *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Tempest*.⁶³ He found the farewell scene in *Romeo and Juliet* "divinely beautiful" and a perfect example of the 'poésie descriptive' which he thought, however, was 'a unique *tour de force* even for Shakespeare'.⁶⁴ Nonetheless, he was not uncritical of the English poet, whose histories, and particularly their historical scenes, he dismissed as the 'least successful'.⁶⁵

58 *Kossuth Lajos iratai*, p. 593, note 1.

59 For the history of *Macbeth* in nineteenth-century Hungary, see Bayer, Vol. I, pp. 234–72.

60 For an ironic reference to his ability to write poetry, see Kossuth to his mother, Buda, February 24, 1839, in *Kossuth Lajos iratai*, p. 609.

61 Cf. Hippolyte Taine, *Histoire de la littérature anglaise*, Paris, 1863, Vol. II, pp. 93–102; Antal Szerb, *A világirodalom története*, Budapest, 1941, Vol. I, p. 346.

62 Kossuth to his mother, Buda, May 5, 1838; Kossuth's article for *Jelenkor*, No. 64, 1840, which was identified by Pajkossy partly on the basis of a reference to *Macbeth*; several of his articles for *Pesti Hírlap*, 1841–42, in *Kossuth Lajos iratai*, pp. 403, 606 (note 3), 647.

63 Kossuth to Pál Almási Balogh, Buda, March 15, 1840; Kossuth to Kornélia Vachott, Parád, July 21, 1840, in *Kossuth Lajos iratai*, pp. 620, 643.

64 Kossuth to his father and mother, Buda, May 20, 1838, OL: R 90, I. 50; in *Kossuth Lajos iratai*, p. 412.

65 Kossuth to his mother, Buda, September 27, 1838, OL: R 90, I. 49, p. 106; in *Kossuth Lajos iratai*, p. 493.

Though it seems little short of a miracle, by the time an amnesty set him free in 1840, Kossuth was equipped with some command of English. He had studied a number of British and American authors, and acquired a feel for the structure and rhythm of the English sentence. It was not Shakespeare's poetry and music alone that he found spell-binding: Shakespeare had obviously taught him much about interpersonal relations, about power, influence and politics. Born and bred in early nineteenth-century Hungary, his intellectual horizons were extended by his literary pursuits. Also, given his deep interest in drama and the theatre,⁶⁶ he was obviously greatly affected by the theatrical in Shakespeare and several other dramatists, and it is very likely that his reading contributed to the much-debated histrionics of his later public appearances. Based exclusively on his reading of classical English and American authors, and chiefly on his intimate knowledge of Shakespearean tragedies, Kossuth's English was now able to support his political role in the English-speaking world. Kossuth, with his popularity riding high after the martyrdom of the prison years,⁶⁷ was ready to put the language of Shakespeare to political use.

III

Evidence of his knowledge was slow in coming. He had never been to Britain or the United States before being forced to choose exile after the defeat of the Hungarian revolution and War of Independence in 1849. He was 49 when he first arrived in England and had never had an opportunity to speak to large audiences in a language other than his native one. Not even during his longish stay in Turkey did he have 'much opportunity to study English'.⁶⁸ Speaking at a legislative banquet in Faneuil Hall in Boston on April 30, 1852, he remembered the state of his English before his arrival at Southampton:

66 Kossuth to his mother, Buda, February 11, 1838, in *Kossuth Lajos iratai*, pp. 321–25.

67 Kosáry, 'Kossuth fogásága', Part II, p. 430.

68 Kossuth's Address at Faneuil Hall, Boston, April 30, 1852. Published in *Kossuth in New England: A Full Account of the Hungarian Governor's Visit to Massachusetts, with His Speeches, and the Addresses That Were Made to Him*, Boston, 1852, p. 106. Cf. Dénes Jánossy (ed.) *A Kossuth-emigráció Angliában és Amerikában*, Vol. I, Budapest, 1940, p. 371.

Just to show how little I knew of English, my friend and representative in London, Mr. Pulsky [...], can bear testimony that, a few weeks before I came to Southampton, I sent him a dispatch, written in English, a part of which it was necessary to publish; and he, not considering himself authorized to alter it, was somewhat embarrassed, because it was written in such a bad manner.⁶⁹

In a speech at Winchester in 1852 he spoke of the 'double difficulty to address you connectedly in English'.⁷⁰ And yet he soon overcame his difficulties and realized 'what an instrument in the hand of Providence became my little knowledge of the English language which I was obliged to learn, because forbidden to meddle with politics'.⁷¹ It was in the United States that he came to appreciate the ultimate meaning and significance of his prison years, increasingly seeing them as having been a time for contemplation and preparation.⁷²

Upon arriving in England and, somewhat later, in the United States, Kossuth was called upon to address large audiences on innumerable occasions.⁷³ He saw his role as an advocate of Hungary's freedom and independence and soon became one of the most influential orators of the period. In just six months in 1851–1852 he gave over 600 public speeches in the United States alone. His public and his critics were amazed at his sonorous oratory and cadences, his original and complex imagery, the force of his reasoning, the power of his intellect, the full display of his unparalleled talent on what then amounted to a world stage.⁷⁴ A contemporary went so far as to describe his 'power unequalled by any departed or living orator'.⁷⁵ Not even 'the idioms of foreign languages' that he used, which Harriet Beecher Stowe complained about, seemed to trouble his enthusiastic audiences.⁷⁶

69 Kossuth's Address at Faneuil Hall, Boston, April 30, 1852, in *Kossuth in New England*, p. 106.

70 Headley, p. 330.

71 Headley, p. 49.

72 Gábor Pajkossy, 'Elöszó', *Kossuth Lajos iratai*, p. 17; Pajkossy, '... cserébe nyertem ...' p. 160.

73 Dénes Jánossy, ed., *A Kossuth-emigráció Angliában és Amerikában*, Vol. I-II/1-2, Budapest, 1940, 1944, 1948; Jánossy, *Great Britain and Kossuth*; John H. Komlos, *Louis Kossuth in America 1851–52*, Buffalo, 1973; Joseph Széplaki, ed., *Louis Kossuth 'The Nation's Guest'*, Ligonier, PA, 1976; György Szabad, 'Kossuth and the Political System of the United States of America,' *Studia Historica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*, Vol. 106, Budapest, 1975, pp. 5–31.

74 Jánossy, *Great Britain and Kossuth*, pp. 85–86, 96–97, 99, 101.

75 Headley, p. 302.

76 Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Sunny Memories of Foreign Lands*, London, 1854, p. 182.

Once in exile, Kossuth continued to read and collect the best of English and American literature. He built up a very sizeable library of some 2,500–3,000 volumes where, in addition to several editions of Shakespeare, English literature was copiously represented through some 250 volumes. Dominated by the English Romantics, the collection included poets such as Wordsworth, Byron, Burns and W.S. Landor, and novelists such as Walter Scott, the Brontë sisters, Thackeray, Bulwer-Lytton, and Disraeli. American authors of *belles-lettres* in Kossuth's rich exile library included Washington Irving, Harriet Beecher Stowe, James Fenimore Cooper and Longfellow.⁷⁷ Yet, notwithstanding his varied reading matter, the general impression Kossuth always gave was that he spoke essentially the language of Shakespeare. Kossuth himself identified English, even American English, as 'Shakespeare's language' when he exclaimed in Boston in April 1852: 'Spirit of American eloquence, frown not at my boldness, that I dare abuse Shakespeare's language in Faneuil Hall! It is a strange fate, not my choice.'⁷⁸ He capitalized on this theme, and was remembered for it even after he died by contemporaries such as George S. Boutwell, governor of Massachusetts in 1851–52.⁷⁹ He often spoke about the origins of his English, particularly in England, and memories of his prison experiences were given wide circulation.

Speaking at Faneuil Hall, Kossuth recalled the story of his imprisonment and implied that the origins of his English should be traced back to his prison years. This, in fact, may be considered the birth of what developed into a personal myth structuring the ties between his personal martyrdom and his English, the language of Shakespeare and freedom, liberty and the English-speaking nations, his mission and the free world of Great Britain and the United States, and, in the following lines, his knowledge of the English language as a service to his country.⁸⁰

I was sent to prison, and was for one year deprived of all intellectual food; until, at last, when permitted to select books, I was ordered to have nothing about politics. Well, indeed, not conscious of what I did, but remembering the treasures hidden in the English language — treasures of knowledge and of science —, I told them to give me an English Dictionary and Shakespeare. These could have nothing to do with politics. Look what came out of that fact! — not that

77 Lajos Kossuth, *Könyv Lajstrom* Vol. I, Turin, Május [8,] 1864, pp. 8–16; National Széchényi Library, Budapest, MSS Collection: Oct. Hung. 1064/I.

78 *Kossuth in New England*, p. 87.

79 George S. Boutwell, *Reminiscences of Sixty Years in Public Affairs*, New York, 1902, Vol. I, p. 208.

80 Legislative Banquet in Honor of Kossuth, Faneuil Hall, Boston, April 30, 1852, *Kossuth in New England*, pp. 106–07.

with my bad English I could contribute anything to knowledge, intellect or righteous sentiment; but, if I did not know what little English I speak, I would not have been received as I have been in England or America, ...⁸¹

Kossuth's case comes very close to what social psychologists describe as the 'mythological transformation of autobiography' in an attempt to make it fit existing patterns of life strategies.⁸²

During his American tour, Kossuth reinforced this message a number of times. 'What little English I know, I learned from your Shakespeare', he declared to his audience in Salem's Lyceum Hall in late April 1852.⁸³ In June he quoted *Hamlet* in the Broadway Tabernacle in New York. Even at the turn of the century, many Americans remembered Kossuth's connection with Shakespeare. William Roscoe Thayer noted in his memoirs published in 1899, 'He was sentenced to a further confinement of four years, during which his great solace was the study of Shakespeare'.⁸⁴ 'His English', Parke Godwin recalled in 1895, shortly after Kossuth's death,

was not so much our modern every-day English as the English of the Elizabethan age. He had learned it, you know, while he was in prison, from Shakespeare and the Bible, and it had in it at times the sinewy strength, the rounded fullness, the majestic roll of Hooker and Jeremy Taylor. Indeed, it was curious to listen to idioms that were like the idioms which the master poet of mankind has put in the mouth of Brutus when he pleaded for the liberties of Rome, or in the mouth of the banished Lear when he discoursed with the elements and made oak-cleaving thunderbolts the vehicles and companions of his passion.⁸⁵

Yet to others, his speeches gave the impression of 'a scholar who had mastered the English language by the aid of books. His idiomatic expressions were few'.⁸⁶ Nonetheless, his career was generally remembered by contemporary American statesmen as 'a meteoric display in political oratory, such as the world does not often witness'.⁸⁷

81 Ibid.

82 Ágnes Hankiss, "Én-ontológiák" (Az élettörténet mitológikus áthangolása), in Tibor Frank and Mihály Hoppál, eds, *Hiedelemrendszer és társadalmi tudat*, Budapest, 1980, Vol. II, pp. 30–38.

83 *Kossuth in New England*, p. 187.

84 William Roscoe Thayer, *Throne-Makers*, Boston & New York, 1899, repr. 1927, p. 89. Kossuth K. 2751/22, István Huziányi Collection, National Széchényi Library, Budapest.

85 Parke Godwin, *Commemorative Addresses*, New York, 1895, pp. 132–33.

86 Boutwell, *Reminiscences*, p. 213.

87 Ibid., p. 214.

Kossuth's reception in England was sometimes controversial and the mere mention of Shakespeare always offered a convenient rallying point. Kossuth knew how to choose the words of Shakespeare when praising Britain's power in a Birmingham address of 1852:

Full well I know that Britannia, with the mighty trident in her powerful hands, is fully entitled — even more entitled than of yore — to proclaim with your great Shakspeare —

This England never did, nor ever shall,
Lie at the proud feet of a conqueror.

I know this very well,

he added.⁸⁸

As a popular biography of the Hungarian governor suggested in 1852, '... with the companionship of Shakspeare, he mastered the mysterious harp of the human heart, whose chords he has touched so well'.⁸⁹ 'In England', the biographer later continued, 'men who have heard the eloquence of parliament for half a century, and could listen motionless to advocates whose fame is wide as the empire, while making juries weep, have felt their pulses leap to the sound of his voice. They describe his eloquence as "Shakespearean", "Miltonian", and "most thrilling"'.⁹⁰ The reviewer for *The Athenaeum* also gave the full story of the prison years and Shakespeare and explained with great enthusiasm:

Out of the great dramatist he learned our speech, our modes of thinking, our national sentiments. Certain it is, that this extraordinary mastery over our tongue has proved power to the Exile and to his cause. It was a sad blunder of the Austrian police to give him Shakespeare for a prison companion!⁹¹

To express the sentiments of 'Englishmen of all parties', the journalist and author Douglas William Jerrold proposed a subscription for 'a testimonial taking the form of a fine copy of Shakespeare, inclosed in a shrine ...'.⁹² Harriet Beecher Stowe recalled how this idea actually emerged: 'There are those here in England who delight to get up slanders against

⁸⁸ Headley, *op. cit.*, pp. 392–93. Quoted from Shakespeare's *King John*, Act V, Scene 7. Correctly: 'never shall' and 'proud foot'.

⁸⁹ Headley, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 302.

⁹¹ 'Eloquence of Kossuth', p. 217.

⁹² *Ibid.*, On the history of the 1851 subscription initiated in the *Daily News* by Douglas Jerrold see É. H. Haraszti, *Kossuth: Hungarian Patriot in Britain*. London-Budapest, 1994, pp. 29–31. For a recent, excellent treatment of the Shakespeare presentation, see Ágnes Deák, pp. 832–48. (See note 1 above).

Kossuth, and not long ago some most unfounded charges were thrown out against him in some public prints. By way of counterpoise an enthusiastic public meeting was held, in which he was represented with a splendid set of Shakespeare.⁹³ Harper's *New Monthly Magazine* was quick to report the background of the 'penny subscription [that was] commenced to represent Kossuth with a copy of Shakespeare's works, in a suitable casket'. The *Magazine* quoted Douglas Jerrold as saying:

It is written in the brief history made known to us of Kossuth, that in an Austrian prison he was taught English by the words of the teacher Shakespeare. An Englishman's blood glows with the thought that, from the quiver of the immortal Saxon, Kossuth has furnished himself with those arrowy words that kindle as they fly — words that are weapons, as Austria will know. There are hundreds of thousands of Englishmen who would rejoice thus to endeavour to manifest their gratitude to Kossuth for the glorious words he has uttered among us, words that have been as pulses to the nation.⁹⁴

Kossuth was excited about the presentation. In a hitherto unpublished letter, dated May 3, 1853, now in the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, he turned to his political friend Charles Gilpin, M.P., revealing the political character of his interest in Shakespeare.

It is Tuesday already; and I have yet no communication about the 'Shakespeare presentation meeting['], at which you desired my presence from Friday next. — Will it be indeed or not? What hour of the day? What is its particular character? A large open meeting or a private one of a committee? Is it indeed to have a political character or not? Am I expected to be present and to speak? What will be the address which I am expected to answer? — about all this I know nothing yet.⁹⁵

The presentation took place in London's Tavern Hall on May 6, 1853. In a major speech, carefully written for the occasion, Kossuth gave the fullest and most spirited version of his encounter with Shakespeare.

And there I sat musing over it [= Shakespeare]. For months it was a sealed book to me, as the hieroglyphs were long to Champollion, and as L[ayard's]s

93 Stowe, *op.cit.*, p. 182.

94 Harper's *New Monthly Magazine*, Vol. IV, 1852, p. 277. Copied by István Gál, courtesy of Gál's family.

95 Kossuth to Charles Gilpin, Esq., 21 Alpha Road, Regents Park, May 3, 1853. The Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington, D.C. I am greatly indebted to Péter Dávidházi for drawing my attention to, and allowing me to use, this document which he found in Washington, D.C. There is no record of Gilpin's answer in the Hungarian National Archives where most of his correspondence with Kossuth is preserved.

Assyrian monuments still are. But at last the light spread over me and I drank in full cups with never quenched thirst, from that limpid source of delightful instruction, and of instructive delight. Thus I learnt the little English I know.⁹⁶

By then his story was complete, burnished to glowing and openly serving political ends. As he added to his audience of Londoners, he acquired from the poet not only his English language skills, but also his knowledge of politics:

But I learnt something more besides, I learned politics. What? politics from Shakespeare? Yes, Gentlemen. What else are politics than philosophy to the social condition of men? And what is philosophy but the knowledge of nature and the human heart? And who ever penetrated deeper into the recesses of these Mysteries than Shakespeare did? He furnished me the materials, contemplative meditation wrought out the rest.⁹⁷

What was originally a personal myth now came to be the basis of a *topos*: Shakespeare's name became identified with Kossuth's long preparation for his role as an exiled spokesman for his country. In his 1853 speech in the Tavern Hall he went as far as to identify Shakespeare unambiguously as 'that mute but eloquent teacher of mine' and referred to his English as 'your language (which) I learnt from him'.⁹⁸

The handsome seven-volume edition, complete with a biography of Shakespeare, and personalized for Kossuth with his family coat of arms embossed on the magnificent binding of all eight volumes, was presented in an ingenious wooden replica of Shakespeare's birthplace. As the small plaque on the gift proudly and characteristically stated, it was 'purchased with 9,215 Pennies, Subscribed by Englishmen & Women, as a tribute to Louis Kossuth who achieved his noble mastery of the English language to be exercised in the noblest cause from the page of Shakespeare'.⁹⁹ Kossuth cherished the splendid gift of London workers, though for a time it was relegated to a storage facility together with many of his less often used books. In the late 1870s, however, his Hungarian visitors were deeply impressed to see in his study in Italy the gift, 'which Kossuth

96 Kossuth's speech was found by Ágnes Deák and recently published in Hungarian translation, pp. 832–48 (see note 1, above). I am indebted to Ms. Deák for generously allowing me to quote from Kossuth's original version which she found in the British Library in London.

97 *Ibid.*

98 *Ibid.*

99 Silver-plated bronze plaque on the model of Shakespeare's birthplace, kept in the Kossuth Museum of Cegléd, Hungary, in what is now furnished as Kossuth's Turin room.

received on the occasion of learning the English language, according to his own statement, in his captivity, from Shakespeare'.¹⁰⁰ He always kept a two-volume U.S. edition of Shakespeare, a Boston gift from 1852, in his house as part of the select few books often in demand.¹⁰¹ All these editions are listed in Kossuth's own handwritten catalogue of his personal library, dating from 1864, and have miraculously survived until today. The books are kept in the National Széchényi Library in Budapest,¹⁰² while the special box containing the 1853 gift is preserved in the Kossuth Museum in Cegléd, Hungary.

Following the well-publicized book presentation,¹⁰³ the symbolism of 'Kossuth's Shakespeare' also found its way into contemporary English poetry. Alfred B. Richards put the very question that Kossuth liked to put himself:

And then thy riper age,
From Shakespeare's hallowed page,
Drew inspiration of our English tongue,
Did no prophetic thought
Tell thee of wonders wrought,
Far from thy home, a stranger race among?¹⁰⁴

Kossuth's critics, however, may have thought that he was not always sincere. By 1854, with Kossuth's celebrity slowly fading away, George Gilfillan argued in *Hogg's Instructor* that Kossuth's ability to suit his quotations to the taste of his actual audience 'is connected more with mechanical readiness and the talents of an improvisatore, than with

100 *A ceglédi százas küldöttség Kossuth Lajosnál* Budapest, 1877, both quoted by Ágnes Deák, pp. 833, 847; (notes 3–4).

101 Kossuth, *Könyv Lajstrom* Vol. I-II, Turin, Május [8,] 1864, pp. 8–16; National Széchényi Library: MSS Coll.: Oct. Hung. 1064/I-II, Vol. I, p. 8, Vol. II, p. 3.

102 The 1853 London gift edition of *The Pictorial Edition of the Works of Shakespeare*, ed. Charles Knight, Vols. I–VII complete with Charles Knight, *William Shakespeare: A Biography*, (London: Charles Knight and Co.), Kossuth Könyvtár 2723. The 1852 U.S. gift edition, originally kept at Kossuth's home, was *The Dramatic Works of William Shakespeare*, in Two Volumes, Boston, 1852, today in National Széchényi Library: Kossuth Könyvtár 1675.

103 Ágnes Deák, pp. 832, 847, (note 2).

104 Alfred B. Richards, 'Welcome and Farewell to Kossuth', from *Minstrelsy of War*, London, 1854, *Testvériség*, Vol. XIX, May 1941, p. 12, István Gál Collection, Budapest, courtesy of Gál's family. Walter Savage Landor also greeted him with an 'Ode to Kossuth' where there is an unconnected reference to Shakespeare: *The Examiner*, December 15, 1849, p. 789; published by István Gál, 'W. S. Landor, Kossuth és a szabadságharc angol költője', *Filológiai Közlöny*, 14, 1968, Nos. 1–2, pp. 34–35.

genius, and shows him rather as the Lope de Vega than as the Shakespeare of orators'.¹⁰⁵ Yet, by the end of the nineteenth century, Shakespeare and prisoner Kossuth became a running theme, a commonplace of history. As time went by, the memory of the prison term and the significance of Shakespeare became more marked for both his English and American friends who remembered Kossuth at the end of the nineteenth century. The story made his way into *A History of Our Own Times* (1879) by Justin McCarthy, M.P., one of the most widely, and indeed, internationally known books on the history of Victorian Britain, soon to be translated into several languages including German and Hungarian.¹⁰⁶ McCarthy discussed Kossuth's reception in England in great detail in his chapter on the foreign policy of Lord Palmerston. 'There was much in Kossuth himself as well as in his cause to attract the enthusiasm of popular assemblage', McCarthy remembered.

He had a strikingly handsome face and a stately presence. He was picturesque and perhaps even dramatic in his dress and his bearing. He looked like a picture; all his attitudes and gestures seemed as if they were meant to be reproduced by a painter. He was undoubtedly one of the most eloquent men who ever addressed an English popular audience. In one of his imprisonments Kossuth had studied the English language chiefly from the pages of Shakespeare. He had mastered our tongue as few foreigners have ever been able to do; but what he had mastered was not the common colloquial English of the streets and the drawing-rooms. The English he spoke was the noblest in style from which a student could supply his eloquence: Kossuth spoke the English of Shakespeare.¹⁰⁷

Increasingly, the personal myth gained public currency and made its way into journalism and popular literature. Kossuth's studies of Shakespeare became synonymous with England and the United States, his English with the language of Shakespeare, Shakespeare's language in turn with the voice of freedom and democracy. Something like a literary *topos* was created, Shakespeare becoming a metaphor for freedom.

105 George Gilfillan, "Louis Kossuth", *Hogg's Instructor*, III, July-December 1854, p. 359.

106 Justin McCarthy, *A History of Our Own Times from the Accession of Queen Victoria to the General Election of 1880*, Leipzig, 1879; McCarthy, *Anglia története korunkban*, Budapest, 1885, Vols. I-III; McCarthy, *Geschichte Englands, von der Thronbesteigung Viktorias bis zum Berliner Kongress 1837-1878*, Leipzig, 1881.

107 McCarthy, *A History of Our Own Times*, Vol. II, pp. 109-10.

Kossuth himself went on to quote Shakespeare in his Hungarian political correspondence throughout his long political career.¹⁰⁸

Quite until the turn of the century, Kossuth's name remained, both in Britain and the United States, synonymous with freedom-loving Hungary. On his death he was mourned even by Conservative British papers as an eloquent champion of the ideals of 1848–49.¹⁰⁹ In the early 1900s, several important British journalists and prospective policy-makers, such as *The Times* correspondent Henry Wickham Steed and historians R. W. Seton-Watson and H. W. V. Temperley, first came to Hungary with the noble image of Kossuth's nation in mind. While in Budapest, they were often assisted and influenced by Kossuth's son, by the family of his friend Ferenc Pulszky, or by his aged supporter General István Türr.¹¹⁰

Much later, barely a day before the Nazi takeover in Hungary, the Budapest daily *Esti Újság* published a long article on 'The Triumphant Entry of Lajos Kossuth into New York, December 6, 1851', and pointed out that Kossuth "owed his immense success preeminently to Shakespeare as he used the archaic and classical expressions of the world-famous dramatist which impressed the masses tremendously. Kossuth himself admitted that 'I learnt English from Shakespeare'."¹¹¹ At that historic juncture, the article was intended as a powerful evocation of Hungary's lost freedom and independence. During the Cold War, Hungarian-Americans sought to portray Kossuth as a champion of Western liberty, and again his English, and its source, Shakespeare, played a part in constructing a politically actualized image of the hero.¹¹²

108 Quotation from *The Tempest* in a letter to the Independence Party of Debrecen, Collegno al Baraccone at Turin, June 15, 1875; quotations from *Hamlet* in a letter to Ignácz Helfy on the Occasion of Ferenc Deák's Death, 1876, and in *Irataim*, Vol. III; quotation from *Julius Caesar* in a letter to Ernő Simonyi, Collegno al Baraccone, December 12, 1876: Kossuth Lajos, *Válogatott munkái*, Budapest, n.d., pp. 227, 240, 260, 355.

109 Sidney J. Low, 'Kossuth and the Hungarian War of Liberation', *The National Review*, Vol 23, May 1894, pp. 350–63; *The Saturday Review*, March 24, 1894, pp. 301–02; *The Times*, March 21, 1894, pp. 9, 11. Cf Géza Jeszenszky, *Az elveszett presztízs. Magyarország megítélezének megváltozása Nagy-Britanniában (1894–1918)* Budapest, 1986, pp. 115, 329.

110 Géza Jeszenszky, *op.cit.*, esp. pp. 10, 48, 51, 64, 65, 72, 89, 92, 93.

111 E. R. Ivándy, 'Kossuth Lajos diadalmas bevonulása New Yorkba 1851. december 6-án', *Esti Újság*, March 18, 1944. Newspaper clipping in the István Gál Collection, Budapest, courtesy of Gál's family.

112 Endre Sebestyén, *Kossuth: A Magyar Apostle of World Democracy*, Pittsburgh, 1950, p. 136.

IV

Kossuth proved to be a genuinely skilful forerunner of modern political marketing. Indeed, his activities in exile can be almost completely described and explained in terms of modern public relations, market communication and negotiating corporate (i.e. national) identity. It seems likely that upon entering the English-speaking world he became very much influenced by British and American political ideas, methods, and tools and reacted sensitively to the then new tactics and strategies of national and international political communication.

Marketing in the modern sense of the world arose as a consequence of the industrial revolution first in Britain and then in the United States. Kossuth realized that image building, for both commercial and political purposes, was a politically useful idea. He immediately understood that first he was supposed to craft an image of his own country, create faith in the brand name of 'independent Hungary,' and embark upon a strategic advertising campaign for the freedom of his nation. He quickly recognized that his personal input was much needed to influence the 'political market' and started a major public relations operation to build up the 'corporate identity' of his country. His British and, particularly, his American tour became an outstanding example of what economists would classify today as marketing communication.

Kossuth was particularly successful in this venture as he identified himself with one, and only one, major cause: Hungary's freedom and independence. He spoke of a number of issues such as freedom, democracy, self-government, republicanism, release from tyranny, free commerce with the U.S., recognition of the Hungarian declaration of independence, but all of them ultimately revolved around the central pivot of Hungary's destiny. He identified himself with Hungary, spoke of 'my bleeding nation,' referring to himself almost as if he were Hungary itself. He repeated a number of themes in the best tradition of classical oratory, and used highly colourful language full of metaphors and images. His success was the result of the style and content of his oratory. He invariably spoke highly of George Washington and William Shakespeare, and always found time to single out the individual merits and achievements of the particular places where he happened to address his audience.

Almost immediately upon his arrival, the Hungarian guest delivered a series of speeches. He had begun to study the English language seriously as an adult, during the years he spent in prison between 1837 and 1840. 'I

told them to give me an English Dictionary and Shakespeare.¹¹³ Reading Shakespeare, together with the English Romantics, left an indelible mark on Kossuth's English, his vocabulary, his grammatical structures and on his phraseology.

As he began to speak English only in exile, at the age of 49, the celebrated public speaker was often lost for words in private conversation. In the light of this, it is quite remarkable how, even on his arrival in England, but especially during his trip to the United States, he became known and respected as one of the great orators in English of the time.

'I heard him speak for about three quarters of an hour at the legislative banquet of last week,' George Stillman Hillard wrote to his friend Francis Lieber on May 8, 1852.¹¹⁴ Himself a master of rhetoric and an excellent orator, whose occasional addresses 'were famous in their day,'¹¹⁵ Hillard was a competent judge of Kossuth's abilities as a public speaker.

That I hold to have been an oratorical achievement of a very high order. He spoke, in all, about two hours, without notes and standing out at full length upon a table. His voice is firm, his manner pleasing and persuasive, and his countenance full of animated expression. His management of his person, his legs especially, was admirable. I can perfectly understand that in his own language he must be a popular orator of the first class. I have no doubt, from what I hear, that he does exert a very fascinating power over all who approach him. He is a man of an Eastern, luxuriant, imaginative & feminine cast and he wins men and especially women, through the sympathies. His charm of his manner is a winning & sort of caressing persuasiveness. This is perfectly consistent with a dash of the theatrical and melodramatic which I think belongs to him. When I first saw him, he was on horseback, and he did not ride remarkably well, and he wore a shewy velvet coat, and altogether he looked to me like a troubadour more than a hero and that he ought to have had a harp by his side, instead of a sword.¹¹⁶

For his most important speeches Kossuth prepared a draft, sometimes with the help of a native English speaker or a Hungarian who spoke the language well. Nevertheless, about two-thirds of the estimated 600 speeches of varying length that he delivered in England and the United States by the summer of 1852 were off the cuff and the majority of these,

113 *Kossuth in New England*, pp. 106–07.

114 George Stillman Hillard to Francis Lieber, Boston, May 8, 1852. Francis Lieber papers, LI 1981, Huntington Library, San Marino, CA.

115 George H. Genzmer on George Stillman Hillard, in: *Dictionary of American Biography Base Set. American Council of Learned Societies, 1928–1936. Reproduced in Biography Resource Center*. Farmington Hills, Mich., 2002. (<http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/bioRC>).

116 George Stillman Hillard to Francis Lieber, May 8, 1852, Francis Lieber Papers, LI 1981, Huntington Library, San Marino, CA.

as well as most of the letters he wrote in English, were considered masterpieces of nineteenth-century English prose. In the next fifty years, books such as *The Golden Age of American Oratory* (Boston, 1857) and several others quoted long passages from these texts. Fifty-two of his best speeches were published right away under the title *Select Speeches of Kossuth* (New York, 1854).

Of course not everybody was enthusiastic about the kind of oratory that Kossuth presented. Francis Lieber's critical comments were shared by several of his American contemporaries:

Do you remember what I say in my *Character of the Gentleman*, on exaggeration? It is both unmanly and ungentlemanly to spout and speak with the eloquence of a fire engine. See what a list of "down-trodden" words we could collect in America. Splendid, meaning now anything not much below par. Magnificent, so common you can hardly use it except you have proved on ten previous pages that you are not word-drunk. Great means almost distinguished, but not quite. Admirable has become so paltry, that it means 9 letters and no more. Greatest man of the age, means at times Webster, at others Scot [Sir Walter Scott], or Kossuth or Wellington, or Barnam [P.T. Barnum], or Jenny Lind, or Lola [Montez] — man, intellect or woman. Kossuth is the greatest orator of the age, if not of any age — my own eyes have seen this in print. Oh, it is beastly. Cows can roar too, and the articulated roar is the most brutal of the two.¹¹⁷

Kossuth's assertive politics and blazing oratory divided Americans. As demonstrated by the correspondence of Francis Lieber with his friends George Stillman Hillard and Charles Sumner, now in the Huntington Library in San Marino, California, the East Coast élite respected Kossuth's fight for the freedom and independence of Hungary, but questioned the reality and rationality of his claim that the United States should get involved in what appeared to be an internal conflict within the Habsburg Empire.

Born in Germany, Francis Lieber (1798–1872) became famous in the U.S. as a liberal political philosopher and lawyer with his 'laws of war,' a systematic, institutionalized code of behaviour to regulate the conditions of warfare. In a Christmas 1851 letter to George Stillman Hillard, Lieber glorified Kossuth:

I have a very high opinion of Kossuth, and even that against which I should write should not be laid to his charge; for if he is presuming, even impudent if you choose, he has but his one great thought in his mind, one great sentiment in his soul — up with Hungary and down with Austria — God speed him; and the

¹¹⁷ Francis Lieber to George Stillman Hillard, Columbia, S.C., January 8, 1852, Francis Lieber Papers, LI 2161, Huntington Library, San Marino, CA.

way that the Americans have given in so far shows that he is not wrong in his presumption. But that Americans should fall in with a Hungarian, when he tells us we are totally wrong, and that Washington did not mean what we always have held him to have meant, and that Americans should, apparently at least, take the key from a strong democratic Gallican element in N. York, that is shameful.¹¹⁸

Much as he respected the Hungarian leader and his cause, Lieber was disturbed by the role Kossuth expected the United States to play in the European conflict. For him Kossuth was too much of a visionary. 'But, then,' he told Hillard,

I should enter upon the true mission of the U. States — the path laid out for them and the means of their influence. I should then ask what are we asked to do? Tell the Czar "Dont do that", as the Chinese, you recollect, let down a large pactboard, from the walls of Hong Kong, on which was written "you must not come in here", for the benefit of the redcoats, who approached with powder and bayonet? Shall we send money? How much? And who shall send it, the Government, or the people voluntarily? Shall we send troops? In less than 6 weeks the Hungarians would mortally hate the Americans, and the Americans hate the Hungarians. It is always so, and must be so. If the foreigner carries the victory, he is hated, because he carries the victory, and because he becomes insolent; if he is not essential to the victory, he is hated as a cumbersome fellow, who wants land, money and often the women.¹¹⁹

Throughout Lieber remained sceptical about the international role America was being called upon to fulfil and the moral feasibility of its possible intervention.

And is Hungary the only downtrodden country? Does Italy not wail and cry for help? Have the German princes not proved truthless truckles? I can very well imagine a case when the U.S. with other powers would say to Russia: Hands off, you disturb the peace of the world and trample on peoples like an elephant on a rice-field. If you dont stop we poach you at sea. But to help a nation to rise in revolution, by our government — it is absolutely preposterous. I would write — I would — I would — but — I shall not.¹²⁰

The Massachusetts lawyer and author George Stillman Hillard (1808–1879) agreed with what Lieber said of Kossuth, but was ill-informed and consequently doubtful about the political abilities of the Hungarians. 'Now on these questions of Hungary, Kossuth, Austria and Russia, we agree to a hair,' he responded to Lieber.

118 Francis Lieber to George Stillman Hillard, Christmas 1851, Francis Lieber Papers, LI 2160, Huntington Library, San Marino, CA.

119 Ibid.

120 Ibid.

I abhor Russia and Austria and regard them as great rocks in the stream of progress & humanity, too big and heavy to be borne away, and always a retarding and perverting influence. And I admit the eloquence of Kossuth, his patriotism and his devotion to a great idea: but none the less do I deem his projects wild & Quixotic and that his influence upon the public mind has been the reverse of salutary. I dont know much about Hungary but I dont believe in their fitness for Constitutional & independent government. The simple fact that a nation of 13,000,000 was thrown down and muzzled by Russia in a single campaign, seems to prove that there are elements of weakness among them which would make it impossible for foreign intervention to do any good. Compare their feeble struggles with the persevering pluck of the Circassians & with the constancy of the Dutch in the 16th & 17th centuries.¹²¹

Lieber repeatedly criticized some of his fellow-Americans for misleading the Hungarian politician and thought Kossuth had been ill-advised. 'Kossuth, for whom I have a high regard,' he wrote to the influential abolitionist statesman and longtime (1852–1874) Massachusetts Senator Charles Sumner (1811–1874),

(though by no means as extravagant a one as many pretend to have for him, and, as I fear, he may have for himself) has ended here where he must infallibly have ended — , and whither some very reckless men have led him, little dreaming or caring what deep injury they were inflicting upon that cause which they, in many cases hypocritically, pretend to serve. Kossuth has distinctly forgotten since he came to this country, that to make a great idea pass into a great event, it requires two things — the wide impulse of masses and the clearest possible definiteness in the conception of measures and husbanding of means in the leaders — the Richelieu or Cromwell part of great events as I will call the latter. Nothing so weakening in the sphere of action as cloudiness, or if you will pardon a very low term, highfelutanism [highfalutinism]. I can say all this because my correspondents can testify that from the first I have said that the course pursued by Kossuth must necessarily lead to Congress and that the distinct question what? and the higher the path led all the time, in words declaration and indictment aspirations, the greater must be the distance from the ultimate point of that line to the point of factual (may I make the word?) reality.¹²²

Lieber emphatically told Sumner: 'I have never felt such itching to write a thorough political pamphlet as when Kossuth was coursing on. I should have done it had I lived in a populous place. But I love him.'¹²³

Lieber never questioned the validity and nobility of Kossuth's cause though he noticed that he 'travels fast and makes long bounds ...' He

121 George Stillman Hillard to Francis Lieber, Boston, January 13, 1852. Francis Lieber to Charles Sumner, Francis Lieber Papers, LI 1975, Huntington Library, San Marino, CA.

122 Francis Lieber to Charles Sumner, Columbia, S.C., January 10, 1852, Francis Lieber Papers, LI 3475, Huntington Library, San Marino, CA.

123 Ibid.

could not withstand his urge to write a tract on 'Kossuth and his Mission in the United States' (most probably in 1852) where he declared,

... we have a very high opinion of Louis Kossuth, and most deeply detest the Austrian government — more intensely, probably, than most persons in this country, because we know Austria and thoroughly know it. If the distinguished Hungarian has allowed himself to be carried to the very utmost limit of political propriety, on some occasions since he has been among us — if he has stated that which rises to arrogance, we readily pass it over, at least so far as he is concerned, whatever we may think of those men who have done everything in their power to mislead him, partly through their own want of reflexion, partly for selfish purposes without any abiding belief in their own assertions.¹²⁴

Lieber continued to be captivated by Kossuth's cause:

Kossuth has but one idea, and that idea is a great and noble one — the delivery of his country from an odious, faithless, cruel and coarse government. If in the all-absorbing desire of realizing this great idea, he, occasionally travels fast and makes long bounds, who would quarrel with him? Certainly no generous mind. If every one-sidedness or extravagance in the fiery words of a burning heart were to be a noose, without the benefit of clergy, few fervent speakers would remain un-hanged before they come to the intended end of their discourses.¹²⁵

A close friend of both Lieber and Sumner, George Stillman Hillard felt torn.

In regard to Kossuth I am, as often happens in our intense little community, between two fires. I disprove of his course in America, especially his sort of appeal from the government to the country, and therefore cannot swell the train of his admirers; and on the other hand, there is much in his European career which commands my sympathy and applause, and I do not like to join in any wholesale denunciations of him. The vehement abuse which some people lavish upon him seems to me to flow from a timid conversation, founded on a selfish love of property — a feeling for which I have no great respect. Have you thought or read about Hungary and his course there? If you have, I pray you tell me what you think about him.¹²⁶

When Kossuth left the United States he felt keenly the division of public opinion in the country he tried to win over in vain. His prophetic idea that the United States should play a major role in European politics proved to be premature: he was a hundred years ahead of his time. It was far too early to suggest

124 Francis Lieber, 'Kossuth and his Mission in the United States,' probably 1852, Francis Lieber Papers, LI 478, Huntington Library, San Marino, CA.

125 Ibid.

126 George Stillman Hillard to Francis Lieber, Boston, May 8, 1852, Francis Lieber Papers, LI 1981, Huntington Library, San Marino, CA.

that the policy of Europe will have a visible effect upon the character, power, and destiny of the American republic. That policy as indicated by Russia and Austria, is the work of centralization, consolidation and absolutism. American policy is the antagonist of this.¹²⁷

Stating that ‘Russia and the United States are as unlike as any two nations which ever existed,’ Kossuth went as far as to prophecy that war between the two ‘will be inevitable’.¹²⁸

V

Lajos Kossuth never accepted the notion that he was a ‘visionary’ and considered himself a ‘practical man’ and an achiever. To the end of his journey he spoke with pride and self-confidence of his own leading role in the Hungarian revolution and war of independence and declared in his last Boston speech on May 14, 1852 at Faneuil Hall:

Some here take me for a visionary. Curious, indeed, if that man who, a poor son of the people, took the lead in abolishing feudal injustices a thousand years old, created a currency of millions in a moneyless nation, and suddenly organized armies out of untrained masses of civilians; directed a revolution so as to fix the attention of the whole world upon Hungary, beat the old, well-provided power of Austria, and crushed its future by his very fall, and forsaken, abandoned, in his very exile is feared by Czars and Emperors, and trusted by foreign nations as well as his own — if that man be a visionary, then for so much pride I may be excused that I would like to look face to face into the eyes of a practical man on earth.¹²⁹

Through the press, his fame spread all over the country, reaching even the Pacific coast, which he never visited. Thanks to regular and surprisingly detailed reports published in *The Los Angeles Star*, *The Daily Union of Sacramento*, *The San Diego Herald*, *The Oregon Spectator* of Oregon City, *The Weekly Oregonian* of Portland and *The Deseret News* of Salt Lake City, readers in the West could follow Kossuth’s reception in the eastern states. The press coverage on the western coast was exceedingly favourable towards the Hungarians’ plight, with opinions split only on the issue of whether the United States be content to give moral and financial

127 Kossuth’s speech at Faneuil Hall, Boston, April 29, 1852, *Select Speeches of Kossuth*, pp. 320–21.

128 *Ibid.*

129 *Select Speeches of Kossuth*, p. 368.

support or whether it should also issue a political guarantee for non-intervention in Hungary's domestic affairs.

On July 14, 1852 Kossuth left the United States for good. Bitterly disappointed, he took stock of the scant results his journey had produced:

The novelty has long since subsided, and emotion has died away. The spell is broken which distance and misfortune cast around my name. The freshness of my very ideas is worn out. Incessant toils spread a languor upon me, unpleasant to look upon. The skill of intrigues, aspersing me with calumny; wilful misrepresentations, pouring cold water upon generous sympathy.¹³⁰

Although he never again visited North America, Lajos Kossuth has not been forgotten in the United States. He has a statue in New York City and in the Capitol in Washington, D.C. Portrayal on a United States postage stamp secured his place as a 'champion of liberty.' On his bicentenary he has been remembered in the U.S., mostly by Hungarian-Americans who have celebrated him throughout the country, from New York to New Orleans. As of 2001, New York Governor George Pataki, himself of Hungarian descent, declared December 5 'Lajos Kossuth Day' in the State of New York. Hungarians, in and out of Hungary, continue to think of him as their hero who was once worshipped by America. Even though his American journey produced no lasting political or financial results, Lajos Kossuth single-handedly did more to articulate the Hungarian cause to America and to secure international recognition for Hungary than anyone before or since, or could possibly do in the future. He was the man who put Hungary on the political map of Europe.¹³¹

130 *Select Speeches of Kossuth*, pp. 373–74.

131 In this paper I have made use of two of my previous articles: “‘Give Me Shakespeare’: Lajos Kossuth’s English as an Instrument of International Politics,’ in: Holger Klein and Péter Dávidházi, eds., *Shakespeare and Hungary, Shakespeare Yearbook*, Vol. 7, N.Y., 1996, pp. 47–73 and “...to fix the attention of the whole world upon Hungary ...,” Lajos Kossuth in the United States, 1851–52,’ *The Hungarian Quarterly*, Vol. 43, No. 166, Summer 2002, pp. 85–98.

Comments on Tibor Frank's Paper, 'Marketing Hungary'

Daniel Abondolo

To the student of Hungary, whatever her or his discipline, Lajos Kossuth must seem a quintessentially paradoxical figure. Tibor Frank's paper has stimulated my thinking along lines which persuade me to suggest a small thesis: In whatever disciplinary terms we frame the Kossuth paradox, the chief contrast may be boiled down to one which we may express metaphorically as *inside v. outside*. I can outline this thesis most clearly and compactly in the form of questions. The questions have a philological bias, but practitioners from other disciplines will want to translate them, I hope, into terms articulated by their own training and practice.

'Shakespeare became a metaphor ...' [221]. For *metaphor*, here, can we not usefully substitute *metonymy*, taken in the broadest, Jakobsonian, sense, *i.e.*, embracing, *inter alia*, *synecdoche*? If by 'sliding transitions' [221] *Grenzverschiebungstropen* are meant, then *Shakespeare* can stand for *England* in the same and opposite way as *Egypt* may stand for *Cleopatra*. By contrast, it is through metaphor properly so called that *England* may stand for *freedom*: metaphor is the *Sprungtrope par excellence*.

Kossuth's oratorical talents are the stuff of legend. And oratory is a forensic activity, more visibly societal than what at first glance appears to be the private practice of the poet. But oratory has a linguistic, and therefore a poetic, dimension, and one which is more profound and multi-layered than is usually appreciated. In attempting to assess contemporary judgements of Kossuth's oratorical competence and performance, ought we not to try to distinguish content from form or, to put it in rhetorical terms, argument from *ornatus*? We read that '[Kossuth's] intimate knowledge of a variety of classical English authors, as well as his remarkable familiarity with the language of both English and American Romantics, strongly contributed to the vocabulary, the grammar and style of his English in the 1850s and early 1860s' [229–230] but we are given no examples, *i.e.*, specific confrontations of matter drawn from Shakespearean (or other English literary) texts with the

matter of Kossuth's (transcribed) speeches. This is to leave to one side any consideration of the other streams of the multimedia experience of witnessing a public speech: for a textbook example of the distracting power of these, see G. S. Hillard's account [243] of a Kossuth performance, in which numerous aspects of the percept are characterized — Kossuth's stance, dress, appearance and endurance are all cited — but the language itself, i.e. Kossuth's English, is not once described or even mentioned. G. S. Hillard may have been a master of rhetoric and an excellent orator, but ought we to confuse the kind of speaking which he did 'in his own language' — to quote him out of context — with Kossuth's foreign-language endeavours?

There is no doubt — in fact it is a commonplace, and badly needs new elucidation, elaboration, and documentation — that much of the work of Shakespeare exercised an important influence on the development of Hungarian literary language. Such influence is hinted at in catalogues of the private libraries of noblemen, to be sure, but might be more sharply and convincingly delineated in texts, both Hungarian and English. What is the philological status of such texts?

Returning to the linguistic layers of oratory: ought we not to attempt to distinguish Kossuth's English from that of, say, Disraeli? By *English* here is meant every aspect of the language as made perceivable in speech, from the lowest-level phonetic detail (including voice quality) of a particular utterance, on a particular occasion, by a particular individual, to the most abstract features of a culture: 'Surely it is part of the meaning of an American to sound like one' (J. R. Firth, cited by John Laver, *The phonetic description of voice quality*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, Cambridge Studies in Linguistics, No. 31, 1980, p. 5.). We have wax recordings of Kossuth speaking Hungarian; are there recordings of his English? Have they been assessed by phoneticians? Without such documentation, Kossuth's performance is anecdotal, on at least the phonetic level.

Returning to the question of metonymy, we must surely savour Kossuth's irony in writing (or saying? — it is not clear which: another metonymic confusion) that 'an English Dictionary and Shakespeare ... could have nothing to do with politics' [234]. In a fascinating passage uncovered by Ágnes Deák and quoted by Tibor Frank [238], Kossuth slides metonymically from politics, through philosophy, to psychology: in this utterance he is clearly aware that part of the evocative power of *Shakespeare*, for a nineteenth-century English-speaking audience, must be sought by invoking politics; compare here his contrasting of the 'visionary' and the 'practical man' in his last speech in Boston, Massachusetts, 14 May 1852 (Francis W. Newman, *Select Speeches of Kossuth*.

Condensed and Abridged, with Kossuth's Express Sanction, New York: C. S. Francis & Co./Boston: Crosby, Nichols & Co., 1854, p. 368). Is there an element of mountebankery here? Only in the sense that Kossuth sought to conceal his own visionary qualities by distracting his audience with talk of praxis: we should recall that the visionary is a seer, and that the leading trope and *topos* of Hungarian literary self-definition, in the period of national classicism and beyond, was that of the poet as prophet (*vates*). Would it not be in the interests of Kossuth's rhetorical, i.e. public, external aims and aspirations to play down his poetic, i.e. personal, internal gifts and inspirations? When he calls Shakespeare 'that mute but eloquent teacher of mine' [238], he not only employs that most paradoxical of tropes, oxymoron: he also alludes to the fact (or myth, or both) that he learned to speak English not by speaking and listening, but by reading, not through the ears but with the eyes. (The question of phonetics arises here once again. Walker's dictionary [228, footnote 42] did mark the stress of English words, but that is far from enough indication of their sound to a non-English speaker incarcerated in Buda.)

Finally, there is the idea of Shakespeare as 'rallying point' [236]. Do we not see here, if not a reality, then at least a Hungarian projection, on to the English-speaking world, of its own desire that its greatest writers be recognized abroad? Views of Hungary *from the inside* can be understood only with the help of Hungarians' views of their perception *from the outside*: and these views have been, for over two centuries, unremittingly negative only in the case of Hungary's writers. The reason universally cited for this undeservedly low esteem is language, and specifically the uniqueness, remoteness, and alienness, — the idiosyncratic *qualitas* and *quidditas* — of the Hungarian language. For how else explain the worldwide recognition of achievements by Hungarian speakers in the fields of music, painting, sculpture, photography, and the cinema, not to mention mathematics, physiology, chemistry and physics, all fields in which linguistic *qualitas* and *quidditas* are far less important? Does not Kossuth offer, for Hungarian and English speakers alike, a tempting exception to this commonplace? The myth that he achieved such wide recognition outside, i.e. *extra Hungariam*, through his use of language is thus somehow, and unfortunately, more engaging than the philologist's still unanswered question: Just what was his English like?

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